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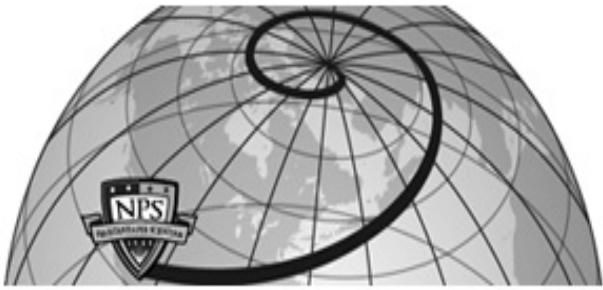

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POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE FRENCH NATIONAL COMMITTEE, 1942-1943.

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Political Consultations Between the United States and the French National Committee, 1942-1943: The Embassy of Admiral Harold R. Stark, USN

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty

of the

Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

by

Benjamin Mitchell Simpson, III

Lieutenant-Commander, United States Navy

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 15, 1968

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VITA

Benjamin Mitchell Simpson, III,

Lieutenant-Commander, United States Navy

Born: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, February 16, 1932

Education: Private and public schools, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

Colgate University, 1949 - 1953

University of Pennsylvania, 1953 - 1956

Fletcher School, 1965 - 1968

Degrees: A.B., Colgate University, 1953

Ll.B., University of Pennsylvania, School of Law, 1956

M.A., Fletcher School, 1966

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Upon graduation from the University of Pennsylvania, Lieutenant-Commander Simpson attended Officer Candidate School where he was initially commissioned as an Ensign, United States Naval Reserve, in December 1956. Subsequently he received a commission as a regular officer in the United States Navy. He served in the amphibious force, the carrier strike force and in destroyers before being assigned by the United States Navy as a postgraduate student at the Fletcher School. His publi-

cations have been limited to newspaper articles.

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ABSTRACT

Before the United States entered World War II, the President was concerned with the security of the Western hemisphere. Military planners addressed themselves to the strategic problems of hemispheric defense and to the potential threat which would be posed by Axis control of North and West Africa. On the diplomatic scene Secretary of State Cordell Hull negotiated the Act of Havana in 1940 with its far reaching no transfer principle. The United States also maintained diplomatic relations with the government of Marshal Petain at Vichy in an attempt to encourage French independence from Germany or at the very least to inhibit a collaboration policy.

When the United States entered the war in December 1941, the necessity for dealing with Vichy still remained. However, prosecution of the war required contacts with the French National Committee under the leadership of General Charles de Gaulle. The United States needed the use of landing fields and other facilities in the Pacific and in the sub-Saharan portions of the French Empire. These colonies had declared their support for General de Gaulle. Thus the United States had to deal with a legal French government at Vichy and with a dissident French movement.

While still maintaining diplomatic relations with Vichy, the United States in July 1942 designated Admiral Harold R. Stark, USN, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, and Brigadier General Charles L. Bolte, USA, to consult with the French National Committee on all matters relative to the conduct of the war. Within a short time, Admiral Stark became a de facto ambassador, conducting consultations on political as well as on technical military questions. His diplomatic duties continued until the French Committee of National Liberation, formed in June 1943, obtained recognition by the United States following the Quebec Conference in August 1943.

Despite the official designation of an Army officer as an associate, Admiral Stark by virtue of his rank and because of his capable staff, including Commander Tracy B. Kittredge, USNR, shouldered the main burden of the diplomatic functions, which were performed in close cooperation with the American Ambassador and his staff.

The North African landings in November, 1942, produced a major crisis in American relations with the French National Committee. While admitting the necessity of an Allied understanding with Admiral Darlan and the French authorities in North Africa, General de Gaulle was outraged that the Allies, and particularly the Americans, did not turn to him to lead the French forces in that area. A meeting in Washington between President Roosevelt and General de Gaulle was arranged for the end of December 1942 or early January 1943 for the purpose of recon-

ciling or at the very least, ameliorating opposing views.

The assassination of Admiral Darlan on Christmas Eve, 1942 removed a political embarrassment for the Allies. The selection of General Henri Giraud to succeed him created a rival to General de Gaulle for leadership of all the French forces opposing Germany. The ensuing six months saw a political struggle between Generals de Gaulle and Giraud in the guise of negotiations for the unification of French forces. While the United States supported General Giraud, Great Britain tended to back General de Gaulle, but not to the detriment of the Anglo-American special relationship. These differing views complicated matters and at times threatened to produce severe strains.

Admiral Stark in London dealt with General de Gaulle in an attempt to further the unification of the French forces. Much of his diplomatic duties consisted simply of reporting to Washington on the status of the de Gaulle-Giraud negotiations.

Gaullist recruiting of seamen from North African French ships in American and British ports threatened to disrupt shipping needed for the war effort. The Secretary of State specifically requested Admiral Stark to discuss the question with General de Gaulle. These consultations were fruitless. Indeed, the ultimate solution was an agreement with General Giraud on the unification issue.

The question of recruitment of seamen came to a head in the JAMAIQUE incident. To forestall Gaullist recruitment and possible desertions from a North African French ship, chartered to the Supreme

Allied Commander in North Africa, and at that time in the Clyde, Admiral Stark ordered an American armed guard placed on board. This extraordinary act created an uproar among the Fighting French, who saw the issue as a political one relating to the right to control the crew. Admiral Stark saw the issue in terms of operational necessity.

The JAMAIQUE incident illustrated the vast difference in outlook between American policy and that of the Fighting French. General de Gaulle sought the political salvation of France. To this end, he endeavored to achieve the greatest political advantage for his movement and for France, particularly since he saw the Axis defeat as inevitable. The United States, on the other hand, felt the war should be won before political commitments were made. This divergence in outlook was never resolved and explains much of the troubles encountered.

Political differences were only exacerbated by the incompatible personalities of the President and General de Gaulle. Fortunately, Admiral Stark was able to establish a good working relationship with General de Gaulle and in this way he was able to minimize difficulties as they arose. Admiral Stark's success can be measured in terms of accurate observations and reporting, and, particularly, in terms of good personal relations with General de Gaulle.

TO MY FATHER,

A GENTLEMAN

PREFACE

In the world of 1968, Charles de Gaulle as President of the French Republic has irritated and angered many of France's oldest friends and closest allies. Today it may be truly said that Franco-American relations are at a low point. Much scholarly and journalistic attention has quite properly been given to the current state of relations. Since in the very real sense of practical politics, Charles de Gaulle is France, a study of the early contacts during World War II between General de Gaulle and the United States may tend to shed some light on present relations.

There is always a danger in any historical writing of assigning more importance to past events than is really due in an attempt to assert a causal relationship of some sort. In examining the conduct of the first official political contacts between the United States and General de Gaulle, no such assertion will be made. The purpose of this study will be to elucidate for the record the significant features of the consultations conducted by Admiral Harold R. Stark, USN, with the French National Committee. By doing so, some elements of General de Gaulle's outlook and understanding will surface. The application of such elements of Gaullism to the contemporary scene must be left to others.

In the grim days of early 1942, Admiral Stark was sent to London to assume duties as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe. This command was the successor to that of Special Naval Observer, London, which, prior to American entry into the war, facilitated all possible Anglo-American naval cooperation. The scope of Admiral Stark's duties was as broad as the duties themselves were varied. As the senior military representative in Europe, he was the logical choice to conduct consultations with the French National Committee relative to the conduct of the war. Although such consultations were originally intended for technical military and naval purposes, they quickly expanded into full-fledged political consultations. These consultations were the first official political relations the United States established with General de Gaulle, at that time President of the French National Committee.

Admiral Stark's official files, still held by the Navy, provided the bulk of the primary source material. Without the most willing, if not eager cooperation and assistance of Dr. Dean C. Allard of the Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, I would never have come upon this fascinating topic in the first place, let alone discover the rich sources of documentary material. I am grateful to him, and to his staff of conscientious archivists for free and open access to the files and records. Indeed, without their help, the basic research could not have been accomplished. For the very real and practical necessity of declassifying quarter of a century old documents, I am indebted to Commander Burton R. Trexler, USN. Without the assistance of

Arthur S. Kogan of the State Department, I never could have had access to the diplomatic papers in the U.S. National Archives.

Admiral Harold R. Stark, USN, was particularly kind in granting me several hours of his time. His recollection was as keen as his wit. It is seldom that an officer of my rank has the opportunity to talk at length and informally with a Chief of Naval Operations. Admiral Stark by his comments and reminiscences brought to life the events recorded and commented upon in the documents I had read.

He was trusting enough to make to me in fullest confidence comments and observations which corroborated many of my own. This confidence has not been betrayed. If honor were not a sufficient reason, certainly a realization that there is no divine right of absolute disclosure in historical writing is. Scholarship must depend on integrity and discretion, as well as on candidness.

General Charles L. Bolte, USA, was most helpful in answering questions about the participation of the Army representatives. In conversation General Bolte stressed the significance of Army-Navy cooperation in the consultations with the Fighting French. This cooperation was at great variance with his own experience as junior officer and was, in his mind, a much belated improvement of great significance.

There are many persons who gave freely of their time and made many helpful suggestions. Chief among them are my study director, Professor Ernest R. May of Harvard University, who took on this additional task in the midst of a hectic sabbatical.

To my other reader, Professor Ruhl J. Bartlett of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, I owe a special debt of gratitude not only for his interest in my work and for his comments on the thesis as it progressed, but more especially for the extraordinary example of scholarly integrity and openmindedness he has set for all of us at the Fletcher School. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to know him, would do well to follow his example.

The COMNAVEU staff apparently has a loyal and enthusiastic group of alumni. Those to whom I spoke were more than pleased to share their recollections with me. Professor Robert Robbins of the Fletcher School and Tufts University was the officer who brought the records from London to the United States. He provided useful background information and the names of other former staff members. Those to whom I spoke included William S. Sims, Sidney Connor and Paul A. Borel.

In expository writing any given point may be perfectly clear to the author, but not necessarily to others. In this regard, the sharp pencil of my Navy friend and partner in crime, Lieutenant John H. Rixse, III, USN, was most helpful in puncturing pomposities and in identifying murky corners and ambiguous phrases and passages.

Finally, without the ghostly assistance of the late Captain Tracy B. Kittredge, USNR, whose papers, diaries and notes I used exclusively, this dissertation could never have been written. Unfortunately Captain Kittredge never completed the definitive work on United States - French

relations he contemplated and for which he collected so much hitherto unused material. American scholarship is poorer for it. With this in mind, and with great trepidation, I undertook to write a small segment of the greater work. Had Captain Kittredge completed his book, it would have been a fine work.

No amount of expressed thanks to the many persons who helped me in this labor of love can relieve me of the ultimate responsibility for its accuracy and contents. The faults, shortcoming and errors are, and will remain, mine alone.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The German victory over France in June 1940 was as stunning in its suddenness as it was far-reaching in its strategic import. At one blow, one of the two major opponents of Germany was removed from the conflict. The fall of France left England alone to face Germany. Many felt that she, too, would soon sue for peace.

In the United States isolation still encumbered much of public opinion. But President Roosevelt and the Army and Navy planners were thinking in terms of broad strategic questions. Their first and most immediate concern was the security of the Western hemisphere against the extension of non-American military or political control. To this end, the United States adopted a policy of extending military and diplomatic assistance to the British Commonwealth in its war against Germany.[1]

The fall of France, following the German conquest of the Netherlands, produced the danger to American security of the possible

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1. Letter from Joint Planning Committee to Joint Board, January 21, 1941, in Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1941-1942, (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953), p. 30.

transfer of French and Dutch colonies in the Western hemisphere to unfriendly or potentially hostile powers. The danger England faced added the British colonies to the list of threatened possessions.

Secretary of State Cordell Hull was instrumental in concerting hemispheric opinion against any transfers of colonies in the Western hemisphere. In the Act of Havana, concluded in the summer of 1940, the American republics declared their intention to prevent the transfer of any colonies by seizing them, if necessary. If seizure of any colony by a non-American power were imminent, any of the republics, acting alone or jointly, could seize any threatened colony until the machinery established by the treaty could be implemented. Since only the United States and, possibly, Brazil were in any position to act immediately, this amounted to an advance sanction of unilateral action.

The fate of the French colony of Martinique was a source of great concern to the United States. Unlike the Dutch Government, the French government had not gone into exile. Instead, it had concluded an armistice with the Germans and had named Marshal Petain chief of state. Pierre Laval, a man whose motives and politics were always suspect, was the head of the Vichy government in a truncated France. The United States maintained relations with Vichy in an attempt to keep the Empire out of Axis hands, among other reasons. The success or effectiveness of this particular policy was debatable at best.[2] Certainly,

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2. Langer, William L., Our Vichy Gamble, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 389.

the United States could have seized Martinique at will. Contingency plans to this effect were drawn up by the Navy.

While the presence of units of the French fleet under the command of Admiral Robert at Martinique presented a possible danger to the security of the area, planners were also greatly concerned with the prospect of an Axis invasion of the Western hemisphere. As they saw it, German occupation of North and West Africa, particularly Dakar, would give them a jumping off place for an attack on northeast Brazil. With such a foothold, the Nazis could extend their influence into South America, where they enjoyed considerable sympathy, or even northward into the Caribbean area. In either event, the United States would be faced with a threat of alarming proportions.[3]

The military planners conceived operation POT OF GOLD to meet such a contingency. On the diplomatic side, the State Department maintained relations with the French government at Vichy. In this way, the United States retained consuls in North Africa and sought to strengthen the French position there by concluding the Murphy-Weygand Agreement in January 1941. The purpose of this accord was to provide the North African authorities with supplies sufficient to prevent unrest and thereby to deny the Germans a pretext for intervening. By so doing,

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3. Conference of President Roosevelt with principal military advisors, May 16, 1940, in Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, The Framework of Hemispheric Defense, (Washington: Office of Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1960), pp. 31-33.

the United States would be facilitating General Maxime Weygard's task of making that part of the Empire strong enough to resist Germany.[4] Perhaps most important of all, by having consuls supervise the distribution of supplies, the United States kept a foothold in North Africa. The contacts thus derived were to prove extremely beneficial to the United States at the time of the North African landings in November 1942.

Until the United States entered the war there was no particular reason for any dealing with General Charles de Gaulle and the French National Committee in London. In the period from the fall of France to Pearl Harbor, the United States dealt with Vichy to neutralize at the very least the threats to the Western hemisphere.

Meanwhile General de Gaulle was rallying bits and pieces of the French Empire. By mid-1941, the Pacific possessions of New Caledonia and the Wallis Islands, as well as French Equatorial Africa had rallied to him. In early June 1941 General de Gaulle offered the United States, through the American Minister in Egypt, the use of French African ports and airfields under his control in the event the United States entered the war. The United States assigned a Naval Observer, Lieutenant-Commander John Mitchell, USNR, to survey

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4. Langer, Our Vichy Gamble, p. 388.

air routes in French Equatorial Africa.[5]

French territories under the control of General de Gaulle did not really become strategically important until the United States entered the war. However, the Free French were not completely ignored in the period before Pearl Harbor. On November 11, 1941, the President recognized that the defense of territories under Free French control was necessary to that of the United States. He authorized the extension of Lend-lease aid to the Free French on a re-transfer basis of aid extended to the British.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, thrust the United States into a war that extended to the farthest reaches of the Pacific and beyond into India and Burma. Hitler's gratuitous declaration of war four days later made official the unofficial naval war the United States had been waging against Germany since the summer of 1941. The United States was engaged in a global conflict of extraordinary proportions.

The most immediate military and diplomatic tasks were to stem or at least to slow down the Japanese advance in the Pacific, to maintain the lifelines to Britain, to prevent German occupation of French North and West Africa and to maintain the political status quo in the

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5. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941,(7 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959) Vol. 2, pp. 570, 578. LCDR Mitchell accompanied Colonel Harry F. Cunningham of the War Department. This interesting "mission" has been described by Dorothy S. White in Seeds of Discord, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1964), pp. 266-271.

Western hemisphere. All these tasks had to be accomplished while the United States built up its military machine.

While the United States was occupied with problems of the greatest magnitude and was sustaining severe reverses in the Pacific, General de Gaulle suddenly ordered the seizure of the two small French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon without the prior knowledge of Canadian, American or British authorities. In fact, the British had specifically advised against Free French seizure of the islands.[6]

The military importance of these islands was more potential than real. Under Vichy control of the Islands, there was a possibility that the radio station there could transmit information to German submarines. In fact, it never did. But the political importance of these islands far out-weighed whatever military importance they might have or did have.

This unilateral act by General de Gaulle disturbed the status quo in the Western hemisphere and thus it was contrary to the interests of the United States. Following Vichy's proclamation of neutrality, the President had assured Vichy of his intention to maintain the status quo in the Western hemisphere. Furthermore, the Act of Havana was the legal instrument binding upon the United States by which the forcible transfer of sovereignty, possession or control of any possession was

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6. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, (6 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961) vol. 2, p. 657.

outlawed. The seizure of these islands put the United States in a most difficult position.

The upshot of this incident was that the Free French retained control of St. Pierre and Miquelon, despite Hull's most vehement objections. But the price they paid was unfortunate: the lingering antipathy of Hull, which bordered at times on the unreasonable. This incident largely determined the official American attitude towards General de Gaulle. This attitude was essentially unsympathetic and at least partially explains the subsequent failure of Washington to understand the nature of the Gaullist position, despite perceptive reports submitted by the American representatives to General de Gaulle.

As the war progressed in 1942, it became necessary for strategic reasons to deal with General de Gaulle and the Free French. Admiral Harold R. Stark, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, and Brigadier General Charles L. Bolte were designated to conduct consultations with the French National Committee relative to the conduct of the war. At first, these consultations were conceived to be of a purely military nature. But as events unfolded, it became apparent that Admiral Stark and his army colleague were de facto ambassadors, dealing with political matters as well as with purely military questions.

The change in substance of these consultations was directly related to the change in the relative positions and importance to the interests of the United States of the Vichy government and of the French National Committee. As the fortunes of Marshal Pétain waned, those

of General de Gaulle waxed.

When the United States entered the war, General de Gaulle commanded a handful of courageous Frenchmen in the British Isles, and the loyalties of some parts of the Empire. Vichy, on the other hand, still retained control of the formidable French fleet, then in Toulon, and French North and West Africa. The sizeable French North African army was still loyal to Vichy. Therefore, it was in the interest of the United States to maintain relations with Vichy. It became even more necessary to do so when the cross-channel operation was postponed in favor of a more feasible operation in North Africa. To facilitate this latter operation, it was necessary to make every attempt to enlist the support of the French authorities in North Africa, or at least to avoid their outright opposition. The considerable success with which the United States achieved this goal provided the justification of this policy.

The problem of dealing with General de Gaulle was difficult from the start. The United States was faced with the difficulties of dealing with two French groups, one of which it formally recognized as the legal government of France at Vichy, and in the other, Fighting France, it saw a source of military aid against the Axis. Each group had anathematized the other.

St. Pierre and Miquelon soured American relations with General de Gaulle from the beginning. This inauspicious start was followed by fundamental conflicts of interests which were never resolved. The

United States sought to win the war first, before the President would be willing to discuss political settlements or to make commitments. General de Gaulle, on the other hand put politics first. To him victory was definitively assured with America's entry.[7] To him the war was but an interlude. The relative position of France among the victors at the end of the war was the important thing. If General de Gaulle and the French National Committee were to achieve their goals of restoring France to her rightful position of greatness, they must unify the French war effort and obtain Allied recognition of their right to speak for France.

As if the bad start and the conflicting fundamental interests were not sufficient, the antithetical personalities of the President and General de Gaulle were to create additional difficulties. It is a historical fact that the conduct of affairs of state can be influenced for good or for ill by the personalities of the actors. The interests of all parties concerned, including those of General de Gaulle, were at times adversely affected by the personalities of the actors. On the other hand, the compatible natures of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill worked greatly to the benefit of the Allied wartime alliance.

The initial reasons for dealing with General de Gaulle were strategic. He and the French National Committee controlled areas the

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7. Colonel Passy (Andre Dewavrin), 2e Bureau Londres, (vol. 1 Souvenirs, 2 vols., Monte Carlo: Raoul Solar, 1947), p. 236.

United States needed for war purposes. This was the reason the United States designated representatives to consult with him in the first place.

Vichy's position soon became fatally weakened as the North African invasions brought German occupation of the whole of France. Vichy also lost the fleet at Toulon by scuttling it. General de Gaulle's position, however became stronger as that of Vichy weakened and ultimately evaporated.

While it had been necessary at first to deal with General de Gaulle for strategic reasons, it became necessary in the ensuing period to deal with him for political reasons. In early 1943 General de Gaulle, the symbol of resistance to the Germans became a rallying point for many, if not for most Frenchmen. The difficulties of ascertaining or measuring popular support in metropolitan France prevented a real determination of how much popular support he actually had. By May 1943 General de Gaulle had established control over the organized resistance in France and to that extent could quite justifiably claim popular support in his active opposition to the Germans.

This second period saw the greatest difficulties in dealing with General de Gaulle and the French National Committee. The United States was firmly wedded to a policy of winning the war first, and would brook no interference for lesser political reasons. General de Gaulle's position was diametrically opposed. Since he was gaining support among the French, he was able to create more difficulties for the United States by his insistence on achieving his goals.

At his post in London, Admiral Stark bore the brunt of the day to day conduct of relations with General de Gaulle and the French National Committee. There was always a designated Army representative so that the United States officially had two representatives. As time wore on Admiral Stark in effect became the United States representative, especially in political discussions. His functions were two-fold: first, to consult with the French National Committee on military and, as it turned out, on political matters. In consultations on political matters, Admiral Stark and his staff worked closely with members of the Embassy staff. Second, to report matters of interest to the Secretary of the Navy and to the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet.

To put many of the specific questions Admiral Stark and his staff took up with the Fighting French into a proper perspective, it is necessary to sketch at the very least the tangled skein of Gaullist and North African French politics. Without such a supporting fabric, American diplomacy in this respect, as conducted by Admiral Stark, would be a series of isolated anecdotes.

Admiral Stark discharged his diplomatic duties with honor and skill. In so doing, he demonstrated great tact and patience. These qualities led to good personal relations with General de Gaulle, In discharging his reporting tasks to his seniors, he was ably assisted by Lieutenant-Commander (later Commander) Tracy B. Kittredge, USNR, who not only performed the duties of a faithful Boswell, but also

brought an extensive personal experience of living on the continent and a wide range of contacts among the French intelligensia. Both Admiral Stark and Kittredge had served on Admiral William S. Sims London staff during the First World War.

The quality of the staff work was scholarly without being pedantic, accurate and generally unbiased. A study of the relevant papers revealed no particular biases. Indeed, at times it was difficult to ascertain the writer's opinion, until he specifically stated it. For this reason, it was extraordinarily difficult at times to tell how Fighting French actions appeared to Admiral Stark and his staff, other than in the most factual manner.

This is not to say that Admiral Stark and his staff were without opinions, but it is to say that fact was clearly separated from opinion as far as it was possible. Analysis and judgment were separated from the evidence from which they were derived. Admiral Stark kept a steady flow to Washington of memoranda on many aspects of the Fighting French movement. One of the most perceptive was a summary analysis of the course of the development of United States relations with General de Gaulle. Admiral Stark sent it to the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, and to the Director of Naval Intelligence in Washington.[8]

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8. Memorandum, March 1, 1943, in "Selected Documents from Correspondence of Admiral Harold R. Stark, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe," vol. 3, pp. 29-32.

This memorandum accurately focused on the essential differences in position and outlook that existed between General de Gaulle and the British and Americans, but it characterized those differences from the standpoint of the Americans. For example, General de Gaulle's unflinching and unwavering adherence to his principles was seen as intransigent patriotism and as a misconception of the role he and his movement should play among the United Nations. But it did show that at root the difficulties encountered with General de Gaulle lay in differing conceptions of his movement. General de Gaulle claimed to represent all French interests and France herself. The British recognized him as a leader of those who wished to join him. The United States simply accepted the fact that he did lead some French forces and that he exercised control over parts of the Empire.

The memorandum erred by attributing to General de Gaulle a claim of constituting the legal government of France. The essence of the Gaullist claim was not that of legality or constitutionality. On the contrary, the Gaullists claimed the Vichy regime had forfeited whatever claims to legitimacy it may have had. Therefore, General de Gaulle and his followers were acting in a fiduciary capacity until the French people would be able to choose their own form of government and elect new leaders.

Regardless of whether General de Gaulle acted as a fiduciary or claimed governmental powers, he still claimed to speak for all of France. The extreme bitterness of the Fighting French over American

policy in North Africa, particularly after the landings in November 1942, can be attributed to the American failure to force North Africa to follow General de Gaulle. The United States, by establishing a rival regime in North Africa, regardless of the reasons for doing so, was seen by the Fighting French to have put traitors into power. They thought North Africa should have been forced to follow their true representative of France.

The memorandum noted that from the time the Free French changed the name of their movement to Fighting France on July 14, 1942, General de Gaulle virtually ceased to function as a military General. Instead, he became primarily a symbol of French resistance and a controversial center of French politics. This development was in keeping with General de Gaulle's concept of the salvation of France, now that he assumed the war had been inevitably won. But the Americans and British, who had to wage the war, were more interested in military support from General de Gaulle than in playing his political game.

The then poor relations between Fighting France, on the one hand, and the United States and Great Britain, on the other, the memorandum observed, did not reflect any change in General de Gaulle's policy or outlook. Rather it reflected a lack of change. By dealing with officials having had past connections with Vichy, the United States in particular soiled the honor of France. General de Gaulle was particularly sensitive on this latter point. It is not surprising that he was sensitive to real or imagined affronts to his

highly developed conception of French honor.

The most perceptive comment of the memorandum was the observation not that General de Gaulle had not changed since June 1940, but that he had failed to change to adapt to changing circumstances. This implied criticism of General de Gaulle clearly illustrated the vast differences in perception of the role of Fighting France held by General de Gaulle and by the United States. The United States sought to prosecute the war by all means available and adopted a policy attuned to opportunity and expediency. General de Gaulle, seeing an ultimate Allied victory, utterly refused to countenance anything but the principles he laid down for the preservation and honor of France.

There is little evidence what, if any, effect this memorandum had on Washington. In all probability it had no effect, but not because of callousness of the Secretary of the Navy and of the State Department.[9] Rather, it was because the United States was engaged in a global war of titanic proportions, General de Gaulle and the Fighting French were relatively unimportant compared to the other problems daily forcing themselves upon the policy makers in Washington. It fell to Admiral Stark to cope with General de Gaulle.

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9. A search of the State Department files did not reveal either the memorandum or a reference to it. Apparently it did not leave the Navy Department after Admiral Stark sent it to Washington.

CHAPTER II

CONSULTATION PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED

The exigencies of waging war in the Pacific, European and African theaters required that the United States deal with French authorities. It seemed important to preserve a presence in North Africa. To complete the air route to the Middle East, which had to run south of Axis controlled North Africa, the United States needed an air base at Pointe Noire in French Equatorial Africa. In the Pacific it needed landing fields and bases on French islands.

These requirements meant that the United States had to deal with both the Vichy regime and the Free French, whom Vichy anathematized. By mid-1942, though the United States had recalled Ambassador Leahy from Vichy, it still maintained diplomatic relations with the Government of Marshal Pétain. The Government at Vichy controlled North Africa, while the Free French effectively controlled France's sub-Saharan and Pacific territories. The problem was to preserve this tie with Vichy while establishing a relationship with the Free French.

A first step had been taken on November 11, 1941, when the President declared the defense of territories controlled by the Free French necessary to the defense of the United States and authorized

the extension of lend lease aid to the Free French. A Free French delegation had been sent to Washington in 1941 under René Pleven.

With the entry of the United States into the war, more direct contact with General Charles de Gaulle and the French National Committee became desirable. Even the State Department, still rankling from the St. Pierre and Miquelon episode, saw this need.

Since the conclusion of the de Gaulle-Churchill Agreement in the summer of 1940, the British had recognized General de Gaulle as the leader of those Frenchmen who refused to accept the armistice and wished to continue to fight. After formation of the French National Committee in January 1942, Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador in Washington, informed the State Department that the British Government would recognize it as competent to represent such Frenchmen and French territories as had rallied to the movement and he expressed hope that the United States Government would follow suit.

Secretary of State Cordell Hull responded that the British request would be given "very careful consideration." Actually, thinking in the State Department ran along rather different lines.[1]

What these lines were can be inferred from a conversation on May 8, 1942, between Lord Halifax and Under Secretary of State

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1. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, (7 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), vol. 2, p. 511.

Sumner Welles.[2] Unfortunately, though Welles confessed that he had not had opportunity to discuss the question in full detail with the Secretary, he professed to be familiar with the broad outlines of thinking and then went on to give his own, personal opinion.

Welles felt that the French National Committee should never in any circumstances be recognized as a provisional government of France, because it would preclude the determination by the French people of their own form of government in the post-war period. As to the Free French movement, Welles felt that it was rapidly falling to pieces. The result would be exceedingly unfortunate for the morale of the French people and it would make it infinitely more difficult for the United Nations to deal with the French territories and colonies not under the control of Vichy. Welles did not indicate how, according to the United States policy of dealing with local authorities in French overseas territories, as opposed to a central authority in Vichy or in London, it would make any difference if a central authority were existent or not.

To end the bickering and quarrels which then sullied the image of the French National Committee, Welles felt that new members should be included who would be "really representative of liberal democratic French thought." In any event, prompt action by the American and British Governments ought to be taken to avoid a

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2. Ibid., pp. 511-513.

complete collapse of any semblance of unity among the Free French elements.

A few days later, Welles told Halifax that it was "urgently necessary" that the British and American Governments agree as to what steps should be taken. Part of the urgency can be attributed to what Welles undoubtedly felt were organizational difficulties in the French National Committee in London, but a large part was due to the possible revision of American policy towards the Vichy government. Welles hinted that it "might be modified drastically in the near future."[3]

Halifax amplified the views of the British Government in an aide memoire delivered to the State Department on May 14.[4] In no case should the French National Committee be regarded as a government to which recognition could be extended then or later. The sole function of the National Committee was to encourage French resistance to the Germans. Halifax pointed out that, despite his defects, General de Gaulle had brought over important French territories, kept the French flag flying in the war, and made himself the symbol of resistance which was rising in occupied France. It would not be practicable for the American and British Governments to handpick any members of the National Committee, despite any hopes for a broadening of representation. The best way of strengthening the National Committee

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3. Ibid., p. 513.

4. Ibid., pp. 517-520.

was to recruit members of the resistance movements in France itself.

Welles questioned the support for General de Gaulle among the resistance groups. His information showed that while some resistance groups might be responsive to the General, other equally important if not more important groups were opposed to him. Welles felt it would be unwise and politically inexpedient officially to acknowledge General de Gaulle as the leader of resistance elements in France which showed no inclination to accept his leadership.[5] He did not identify these other groups.

The next week Halifax and Hull discussed the Free French. Halifax told Hull that he thought General de Gaulle could well put out a statement that he was engaged in the prosecution of the war and that in the meantime he would be engaged in building up a political organization for the post-war government of France.[6]

By way of reply, Hull categorically stated that the United States did not propose to take up with General de Gaulle any phase of the political situation in France either at that time or after the war. The United States considered the Free French organization to be purely military. Any political functions that might necessarily arise in New Caledonia, Central Africa, or other areas occupied by military necessity were purely incidental. Welles, who was also present, made

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5. Ibid., p. 522.

6. Ibid., p. 521.

a sharp distinction between incidental political functions performed in widely separated areas of the French Empire and political rule over metropolitan France.

Since the British Foreign Office had direct contact with General de Gaulle, and because of the desire to coordinate British and American policy, an aide memoire stating the position of the United States was delivered to Halifax on June 11. Even though this was a preliminary draft, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was authorized to show it to General de Gaulle.

The British Government did not pass on this aide memoire partly from fear of a leak or other unauthorized disclosure, and partly, as Winant reported from London, because of the belief that it would needlessly irritate General de Gaulle if the United States said it would deal only with "local Free French officials wherever they are in control" in French territories. Such a caveat would have no practical value, since such officials could invariably be expected to refer matters under discussion to the General and to the National Committee.[7]

Taking account of British views, the State Department revised the aide memoire. A new version was delivered to the British Embassy on June 23. The most significant change in it concerned the appointment of United States representatives. In the earlier memorandum of June 11, the United States had stated that it would "consult with the

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7. Ibid., p. 527.

French National Committee in regard to appropriate naval and military matters through representatives of the United States armed services in London."[8] (Emphasis added.) In the next draft of June 23, and indeed in the final version as released to the press on July 9, the United States promised more vaguely "to appoint representatives in London for purposes of consultation."[9]

Eden delivered a copy of this final draft to General de Gaulle on June 29. This version was the one released to the press, after a few relatively minor changes submitted by General de Gaulle had been made. Eden gave the General a French translation to obviate the necessity of showing the text to the less discreet members of his entourage.[10]

The memorandum of July 9, 1942, embodied the official policy of the United States. It was released to the press on July 11.[11] It deserves close analysis and examination not only because it was a formal statement of policy, but also because it illustrated the assumptions upon which that policy was based. To say United States policy was based on a misconception would be an overstatement, but the misperception in Washington of the Free French movement and the motives

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8. Ibid., p. 523.

9. Ibid., p. 531.

10. Ibid., p. 532.

11. Department of State Bulletin, vol. 7, July 11, 1942, p. 613.

of General de Gaulle produced needless friction and in the end was counter-productive.

Any analysis of the United States position must take into account two salient factors. First, the United States maintained diplomatic relations with Vichy and was therefore constrained to afford no political recognition to the Free French. Second, the President desired to make no political commitments for the post-war period at that time. Thus, even if Washington had not misperceived the motives and character of General de Gaulle's movement, it probably would have made no difference in American policy.

The memorandum opened with a declaration that the United States was subordinating all other questions to the "one supreme purpose" of winning the war. This was indeed the cornerstone of American wartime diplomacy. The next sentence declared the French National Committee "has the same objective." It was true the French National Committee ardently sought the defeat of the Axis, but only as a means to resurrect France and to restore her to the position of greatness from which she had so precipitously fallen. The United States could not publicly accept this goal, even if it were desired. Contacts with and aid to the French National Committee could only be justified on the basis of military necessity so long as diplomatic relations with Vichy were retained.

The United States recognized the contribution of General de Gaulle and the work of the French National Committee in keeping

alive the spirit of French traditions and institutions. The United States equated the military aims necessary for victory with the realization of the combined aims of the National Committee and the United States. This was only partly true, but it proceeded logically from the initial assumption in the first paragraph. The common aims could be best advanced by lending all possible military assistance and support to the French National Committee as a "symbol of French resistance in general against the Axis powers."

The United States agreed with the British view which was "known" (General de Gaulle suggested "known" as a substitute for the original verb "understood") to be the view of the French National Committee that the destiny and political organization of France must be determined freely by the French people. This statement on its face implied that Washington, despite possible suspicions in the White House and in the State Department, did not consider, at least officially, General de Gaulle as a potential dictator, whatever his own political aspirations might have been.

The policy of dealing with local Free French officials in their respective overseas territories was re-affirmed. But the United States perceived the advantages of centralizing the discussion of matters relating to the conduct of the war with the French National Committee in London. While the United States did not abandon the local authorities doctrine in its entirety, this was at least an admission of the efficacy of Gaullist control of certain overseas territories. At least this

interpretation can be inferred from the juxtaposition of the two sentences containing the two statements. But the third and final sentence of the same paragraph stated that an essential part of United States policy for war collaboration was the extension of lend-lease assistance under the terms of the President's statement of November 11, 1941.

It is not clear from the text whether this coordination was intended to cover relations with the French territories, or aid and assistance matters under lend-lease, or both. It appears that clarity was lost by design, but at least difficult issues were passed over with a maximum amount of grace. Agreement on principles was impossible, but accommodation was possible. The end result was a gain for the United States by providing for a more effective prosecution of the war and a gain for General de Gaulle by receiving an official United States acknowledgement of the existence of the French National Committee and representatives designated to consult with it.

The press release announced that Admiral Harold R. Stark and Brigadier General Charles L. Bolte had been appointed to consult with the French National Committee "on all matters relating to the conduct of the war."[12] The press release left it unclear whether the two officers were to represent their respective services or the United States Government.

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12. Department of State Bulletin, vol. 7, July 11, 1942, p. 613.

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12. Department of State Bulletin, vol. 7, July 11, 1942, p. 613.

Whatever the ambiguities in the designation of the representatives or in the precise meaning of the document, there was no clarification by way of instructions to Admiral Stark or to General Bolte. Admiral Stark received his information from the press release of July 11. In his Bastille Day greeting to General de Gaulle, he referred to himself as the "naval representative" designated by the United States Government.[13] When Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet, visited London in July of 1942, he gave Admiral Stark a verbal "okay" that what had appeared in the press was correct.[14] Leaning on this slender reed, Admiral Stark called on General de Gaulle under the impression that he was solely a naval representative.

He was still in doubt on July 29 as to the character of his representative capacity. In identical informal letters to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations and to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, he observed that from the State Department's memorandum of July 9 it would appear that he and General Bolte were representatives of the United States Government, rather than delegates of the War and Navy Departments. He requested some formal statement as to the nature of the designation and instructions as to his responsibilities and functions.[15]

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13. Stark to de Gaulle, July 14, 1942, in "Selected Documents from Correspondence of Admiral Harold R. Stark, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe," (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU Documents), 4 vols., vol. 1, p. 14.

14. Stark to Admiral Horne, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, July 29, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 1, p. 16.

15. Ibid.

The nub of the matter was that many of the questions already discussed with the French related to the conduct of the war, but went beyond specific questions of direct military cooperation. Admiral Stark wanted instructions to avoid crossing wires. No general instructions were given, or even directions to discuss specific questions. In future contacts with the French, the Admiral had to exercise his own judgment.

Whatever ambiguities may have existed from the American standpoint, there was none from the French standpoint. General de Gaulle in a telegram to Secretary Hull "welcomed the distinguished representatives of the United States."[16]

Groundwork for an initial conference between Admiral Stark and General de Gaulle was prepared by Lieutenant-Commander Tracy B. Kittredge of Admiral Stark's staff in advance talks with René Pleven of the French National Committee and later with Freeman Matthews, Counsellor of the American Embassy in London. In these talks the French attempted to raise the consultations to a quasi-diplomatic level. Pleven told Kittredge that the French assumed Admiral Stark and General Bolte were representatives of the United States Government. He said routine procedures would have to be established to preclude the necessity of referring every question to Admiral Stark and General Bolte. The designation of American technical assistance to deal

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16. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, p. 534.

directly with their French counterparts would involve the setting up of something like an embassy.

Kittredge evaded the question on practical grounds. Though saying that he could envisage a simplified procedure making it unnecessary to consult General de Gaulle, Admiral Stark and General Bolte on every question he expressed doubt about establishing a complicated system of diplomatic relations.[17]

The initial American position was formulated in the talk between Kittredge and Matthews. It was agreed that no quasi-diplomatic arrangements should be considered for consultations with the French. Further, Admiral Stark and General Bolte had such broad terms of reference that they could discuss with the French any question related in any way to the conduct of the war. However, decisions on French requests or action taken on matters discussed could be effected by the appropriate agencies of the United States Government. Finally, informal advice, if needed, could be supplied by Embassy officials or from government services attached to the Embassy.[18]

The meeting between Admiral Stark and General de Gaulle took place on August 3. General de Gaulle agreed to the proposed procedures

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17. Kittredge memorandum, July 30, 1942, Box 207, File: Agreement, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, files (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU files), Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

18. Ibid.

by which consultations with the French National Committee would be conducted. The procedures on the American side envisaged a joint Army-Navy secretariat with common files under the aides of Admiral Stark and General Bolte with assistance supplied by the respective staffs. The American representatives suggested that all communications from the French on subjects either directly or indirectly related to the conduct of the war be addressed to them. Advice would be solicited from the Embassy or from other United States missions on all questions not specifically military or naval in character. Admiral Stark and General Bolte proposed to discuss with French authorities any questions submitted by the State Department, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army or the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet. Reports of such consultations would be made to Army and Navy authorities on military and naval questions respectively and to the State Department via the Embassy on all other questions.

The procedures General de Gaulle proposed for the participation of the National Committee in consultations were in the same spirit as the quasi-embassy concept advanced by Pleven five days earlier. First, he suggested that communications on purely military or naval subjects should be addressed to the chief of his personal military staff. Second, all communications relating to the conduct of the war with economic or political implications should be addressed to the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. Third, technical questions should be discussed by experts designated by Admiral Stark and General Bolte on

the American side, and by the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs on the other side.

Finally, he proposed eventual direct consultations with Embassy officers on non-military and non-naval subjects. In response to this last suggestion, he was informed that only the designated military representatives were authorized to participate in such consultations and that any Embassy or other officials advising on specific questions would be acting merely as expert advisors to the military representatives.

These proposals, along with a query by the military representatives as to whether they were acceptable, were cabled to the State Department by Ambassador John G. Winant on August 7, 1942.[19] Winant reported that he, Admiral Stark and General Bolte had noticed a Fighting French attempt to put emphasis on the political aspects of the movement and to approach the Embassy directly on such matters. He observed that the State Department was, of course, well aware of the Fighting French feeling of the impossibility of divorcing the movement from its political significance and of French aspirations of obtaining some further political recognition. Winant saw Admiral Stark and General Bolte as representatives of the United States Government, and in view of this designation he felt that all approaches to the National Committee should be made through them.

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19. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, p. 536.

Hull approved the procedures suggested By Admiral Stark and General Bolte.[20] He strictly interpreted the memorandum of July 9, which General de Gaulle had approved, to mean that all communications directly or indirectly related to the conduct of the war would be addressed to the National Committee or to the chief of General de Gaulle's personal military staff, as he preferred. No communications were to be addressed to the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, as such. Hull made no assertion that the military representatives were delegates of the War and Navy Departments. Rather, he referred to them as "officers designated by this Government" and as such they were the only persons authorized to consult with the National Committee on the prosecution of the war, even to the specific exclusion of Embassy personnel. He directed Winant to make it abundantly clear to the French that in consultations in which officers of the Embassy might take part, they would be acting in a purely technical and advisory capacity under the direct orders of the military representatives.

The approval by Hull of the procedures established for consultations with the French National Committee placed American-Fighting French relations on a more or less regular basis. Hull tacitly admitted that the military representatives were appointees of the United States Government, rather than purely military delegates. Because of the existence of official diplomatic relations with Vichy, it is

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20. Ibid., p. 538.

understandable that Hull chose a circuitous and indirect method of designating representatives of the Government, rather than a more direct and unambiguous approach.

It must have been obvious to the French that the United States was reluctantly designating governmental, rather than departmental representatives. Nevertheless, with considerable tenacity General de Gaulle continued to insist that communications concerning questions other than of a purely military nature should be addressed to the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. The French National Committee was very insistent upon being treated as if it had governmental status, although it was not recognized as even a de facto government.

Admiral Stark and General Dahlquist, who had replaced General Bolte as the Army representative, suggested that American communications which would originate from the joint secretariat should normally be addressed to General de Gaulle in his dual capacity as President of the French National Committee and Commander of the Fighting French Forces.[21] The effect of this suggestion would have been to leave it up to General de Gaulle or his liaison officer to determine the appropriate French official for action.

General de Gaulle did not accept this suggestion, presumably because he did not wish to concede the political point involved. Ostensibly his reason for doing so was based on the nature of the internal

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21. Stark and Dahlquist to de Gaulle, September 22, 1942, Box 207, File: Agreement, COMNAVEU files.

organization of the National Committee. In discussions conducted by the Army liaison officer, concerning arrangements at Point Noire, Pleven asked that correspondence be addressed to Maurice Dejean as Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. However, the principal letter was addressed to General de Gaulle as President of the French National Committee. The reply was signed by Dejean as spokesman for the National Committee. The final American letter accepted this apparent compromise and was addressed to M. Dejean as a member of the French National Committee.[22]

Subsequent correspondence and other communications were addressed to General de Gaulle or personally to his action officer. No American communications were addressed to French Commissioners as such. In this sense the United States held firm in its refusal to treat the French National Committee as if it had government status. But General de Gaulle, even if he did not win the point, did not concede it. This procedure was generally followed in the consultations with the French National Committee until it metamorphosed into the French Committee of National Liberation in 1943.

The meeting on August 3 of General de Gaulle with Admiral Stark and General Bolte was significant not only because it established the procedures by which consultations were conducted, but also because it signified coordination between Army and Navy representatives and it

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22. Kittredge memorandum, October 9, 1942, Box 207, File: Agreement, COMNAVEU files.

also gave General de Gaulle an opportunity to expound his views on a number of topics.

The potential danger of lack of coordination between the American representatives was illustrated by General Bolte's July 23 call on General de Gaulle. His original intention was only to establish relations with General de Gaulle. However, the Secretary of State had directed General Bolte through the London Embassy to inform General de Gaulle of the instructions transmitted to the American consul at Brazzaville regarding the improvement and operation by the U.S. Army of the airport at Pointe Noire. The negotiations concerning that air base were conducted by the Army as an adjunct to the establishment of a strategically necessary air base. But the Secretary of State's instructions to General Bolte made it difficult for him to maintain he was representing only the War Department, in close association with the Navy representative. Even though the French told him they considered him as a representative of the United States Government, General Bolte maintained his instructions came from the War Department.[23]

Admiral Stark was in a less awkward position when he suggested that he and General Bolte meet with General de Gaulle to discuss general problems common to the French and to the Americans in conducting the war. This conversation was to be held pending more

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23. Bolte memorandum, July 25, 1942, Box 207, File: Agreement, COMNAVEU files.

complete information as to the specific functions which might be assigned to the United States representatives.[24]

Prior to the meeting on August 3, General Bolte and Admiral Stark had agreed to establish joint procedures for consultations with the French. A memorandum embodying these procedures was presented to General de Gaulle. It formed the basis of Winant's subsequent cable to the War Department. In this way they avoided the potential danger of crossing wires in subsequent consultations.

The conversation with General de Gaulle and René Pleven on August 3 lasted nearly two hours and was cordial in tone, but frank in content.[25] Frankness and cordiality generally characterized the personal meetings of Admiral Stark and General de Gaulle. The greater part of the meeting was taken up by General de Gaulle's review of several general questions, partly because the General desired to state his position and partly because Admiral Stark and General Bolte had little information, beyond specific questions as to what their government expected of them.

First, General de Gaulle inquired as to United States policy in relation to local Fighting French authorities. He referred to previous misunderstandings and difficulties with American authorities. He asked

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24. Stark to de Gaulle, July 31, 1942, Box 207, File: Agreement, COMNAVEU files.

25. Kittredge memorandum, August 3, 1942, Box 207, File: Agreement, COMNAVEU files.

specifically whether the United States Government was now disposed to deal with the French National Committee rather than with the local authorities in Africa and in the Pacific, as had been the case previously under the local authorities doctrine. In reply, Admiral Stark and General Bolte indicated that they had been instructed to reach general agreements with the French National Committee which could then be the basis for more specific and detailed arrangements made with the local authorities to implement the general agreements.

It was necessary, General de Gaulle said, to discuss many questions not of an exclusively military or naval character. The conduct of the war necessarily involved cooperation and agreement on many non-military subjects. The American representatives agreed and indicated they had received instructions through the State Department to discuss such subjects. Although copies of such instructions could not be found in either Navy or State Department archives, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Hull maintained the distinction he made to Halifax on May 21 between political questions ancillary to the conduct of the war and the post-war political organization of France. It was obviously necessary to discuss the former category with the National Committee.

Admiral Stark and General Bolte stated they were not qualified to discuss the political aspect of how to give practical aid in the mobilization of a maximum of French participation in winning the war. General de Gaulle did not press the point.

The real French contribution to victory, the General said, would not come from a handful of Fighting French outside France, but from the action of millions of Frenchmen in the metropole. He suggested the desirability of direct exchange of intelligence between American and French services on the situation in France, the disposition of German troops and other developments in France. The American representatives demurred by saying that such matters must be discussed by British as well as American authorities, but they assured the General that full consideration would be given to his suggestion.

Since the United States and Fighting France were in the war, the General said, he and his collaborators desired a maximum of effective cooperation in the common war effort. He referred to the promptness with which the National Committee had responded to American requests. As illustrations he gave French acquiescence and assistance to the landing of American troops in New Caledonia and in the Wallis Islands, and the arrangements for American use of the port and air field facilities at Point Noire. He would appreciate American aid to the Fighting French efforts to reconstitute their own forces and to the eventual restoration of their own country to its rightful place among the United Nations. He was particularly appreciative of Admiral Stark's friendly and sympathetic attitude, of the U.S. Navy's agreement to aid Fighting French naval forces and to train naval aviators, and of the authorization of direct consultations on matters relating to the conduct of the war.

At the end of the meeting, General de Gaulle inquired as to whether the British were being kept informed of American discussions with the National Committee. Admiral Stark and General Bolte expressed the need for complete frankness in discussions with Allies. But, they also explained, the British had been and would continue to be informed only of negotiations on matters in which they were directly concerned. This attitude satisfied General de Gaulle.

In reporting to Admiral King on his consultations with the French National Committee, Admiral Stark commented that General de Gaulle and his collaborators had been uniformly cooperative and had taken affirmative action on practically all requests from the American services. He requested to be kept informed of negotiations with the Fighting French delegation in Washington and of decisions of the United States Government.[26] This request was understandable in the light of his recent experience with a lack of instructions.

The initial phase of official United States relations with the French National Committee ended in a spirit of cooperation and good will among the participants in London. Whatever the doubts, suspicions or latent antagonisms may have been in the State Department, and in the White House, they did not cross the Atlantic. Admiral Stark and his Army colleagues, at first General Bolte and then later General John E. Dahlquist and Colonel Sumner Waite, approached their

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26. Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe (Stark) to Commander-in-Chief U.S. Fleet (King), letter serial 00796, September 9, 1942.

delicate task with good motives and with the intention of doing their best to help consolidate diverse elements into the common war effort.

Subsequently, Admiral Stark was in fact a representative of the United States Government to General de Gaulle and to the French National Committee. He was concerned with political and diplomatic problems, as well as with consultations on purely technical military and naval matters relative to the conduct of the war. The history of American contact with the French National Committee from July 1942 to the limited recognition given to the French Committee of National Liberation in August 1943 is one of an evolution from consultations on an ad hoc basis to a continuous and rather intimate contact towards the end of the period.

The continual French insistence upon greater political recognition was seen for what it was. It was submerged for a time in the greater spirit of wartime cooperation. To be sure many frustrations lay ahead for General de Gaulle. But for the moment a high tide of good feeling was reached, which was no mean achievement considering the very different outlooks, positions and objectives of the two parties. These differences would emerge in the next few months to frustrate General de Gaulle, to try severely the patience of the President, to test the diplomatic skill of Admiral Stark and to confirm the opinion of the State Department. Admiral Stark's patience, skill and above all, his good personal relations with General de Gaulle would do much to ease the strain.

CHAPTER III

NORTH AFRICA INVADED

Early on Sunday morning, November 8, 1942, Allied Forces under the command of General Eisenhower landed in North and Northwest Africa. Operation TORCH had been executed. It was the first major offensive action by the Americans against the Germans in World War II. It was the first time an American general had commanded Allied troops in Europe. It produced the first major change since the 1940 Armistice in the position of France in relation to the United States. By breaking diplomatic relations with the United States later that same day, Vichy eliminated the vestigal remains of the Third Republic from the active consideration of the United States.

The Allies, and particularly the Americans as the dominant partner in the invading force, needed someone to rally the North African French, if not specifically to active opposition to the Germans at first, at least to not opposing the Allied landings. Prior to the invasion, such arrangements had been made with key French leaders in North Africa. As a practical matter, General de Gaulle would have been of little, if any, assistance to the Allies because he was in open rebellion against Marshal Petain, who held the loyalties, or at least sympathies, of most of the men capable of rallying North Africa to

the Allied cause.

For these reasons, the United States put General Henri Giraud forward as "Commander-in-Chief, French Army of North Africa," to be a rallying point for opposition to the Axis and hopefully the leader of a new force. As an escaped prisoner of war, Giraud's anti-German credentials were unimpeachable. The morning of the landings, Giraud appealed for French support for the American operations, saying there was but one passion, France, and one goal, victory. The presence of Admiral Jean Darlan in Algiers was to be a complicating factor, the extent of which would be apparent within the week.

The immediate and practical problem facing General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Allied Commander-in-Chief in North Africa, was to secure the area at a minimum cost. This objective involved not only the initial landings, but also obtaining the active cooperation of the civil authorities for local administration as well as inducing the military authorities not to resist the Allied landings. Obviously General de Gaulle was not the man for this task. If the French forces in North Africa, which amounted to a substantial French force on French territory, could be added to the United Nations forces, that Army would constitute a major factor in future operations.

Such an army would also constitute a major political development, since it would be a large non-Gaullist force on the Allied side. The problem facing the Allies would be to encourage a fusion of the Fighting French and North African French forces for a more effective

prosecution of the war. General de Gaulle was also interested in a fusion of the French forces, but for other reasons. He saw a rival in the creation of another French force within the Allied camp.

Whether Admiral Stark was aware of General de Gaulle's perception of a rival in General Giraud and the forces he might rally is not clear. But Lieutenant-Commander Kittredge, of Admiral Stark's staff, reported that he had received a visit on November 8 from a member of General de Gaulle's staff. This unidentified individual asked whether the United States command would help to bring about a fusion between the Fighting French and the North African French forces. He said that if an armored corps of French troops were to be created, General de Gaulle might well be invited to organize, train and command it. It was indicated that the General would probably accept. Kittredge saw the possibility of influential American mediatory action accelerating the fusion of all French forces for military action against the Axis.[1]

The supposition that General de Gaulle would accept a field command subordinate to a higher French authority was not as preposterous in November of 1942 as it now appears with the advantage of hindsight. The General had stated on several occasions that he was prepared to place himself under the orders of any higher officers or

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1. Kittredge memorandum, November 9, 1942, Document 1, Commander, U. S. Naval Forces, Europe, (Stark) to Director, Office of Naval Intelligence, letter serial 01449 of December 10, 1942. (Hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.)

of any group better qualified to bring a united French nation back into the war. He apparently repeated this offer to Prime Minister Churchill on November 8.[2] That he did not do so can be attributed to the lack of any persons outside of France with the requisite qualifications, at least in General de Gaulle's view.

The General felt General Giraud lacked these qualifications because of a Vichy taint and because he did not hold his command independently, but from a foreign authority. General Giraud had written to Marshal Pétain agreeing to accept his guidance and as a man of honor would never go back on his word.[3] Whether General de Gaulle was justified in applying these criteria is a matter of judgment, but it is a matter of historical record that General Giraud's subsequent demonstrated political ineptitude would have been a serious handicap to his leadership of any movement for the liberation of France, to say nothing of the restoration of France to a place of importance among the United Nations.

Even though General de Gaulle and the Fighting French had been excluded from the planning and execution of Operation TORCH at the express wish of President Roosevelt, General de Gaulle wholeheartedly

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2. Colonel Sumner Waite memorandum to General Eisenhower, November 10, 1942, in "Selected Documents from Correspondence of Admiral Harold R. Stark, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe," (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU Documents), 4 vols., vol. 2, p. 7.

3. Kammerer, Albert, Du Débarquement Africain au Meurtre de Darlan, (Paris: Flammarion, 1949), p. 106.

approved of the landing. Rumors had been circulating in London for some time, but he received unofficial word of the landings only the evening before from a tip received by Soustelle at the Soviet Ambassador's reception commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution.[4] He was officially informed at noon the following day, November 8, by Prime Minister Churchill at a luncheon at 10 Downing Street.[5]

At lunch General de Gaulle was enthusiastic about the landings, although regretful he had not been informed in advance. He understood and expressed no resentment when Churchill explained the President wished only those who were actively participating to be informed.[6] General de Gaulle stated the first objective was to achieve a cease-fire, and the important thing was to establish unity of the French forces. The Vichy regime must be expelled from Algiers, he said, because the resistance movement would not tolerate it.[7]

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4. Soustelle, Jacques, Envers et contre tout, (2 vols., Paris: Robert Laffont, 1950), vol. 2, p. 108.

5. De Gaulle, Charles, Unity, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 45. General de Gaulle's recollection confirms contemporary documents to establish indisputably that he was informed of the landings only after they had commenced, and not the evening before as Macmillan maintains. Harold Macmillan, The Blast of War, (New York: Harper & Row, 1968, p. 159.

6. Kittredge memorandum, November 10, 1942, Document 3, COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

7. De Gaulle, Unity, p. 47.

Later that day General de Gaulle broadcast a stirring speech to North Africa in which he exhorted Frenchmen there to rise up and to help the Allies without reserve. Frenchmen were urged to disregard names and slogans, since the only thing that counted was the salvation of their country.[8]

The next day, November 9, Admiral Stark and the Army representative, Colonel Sumner Waite, called on General de Gaulle to express appreciation for the broadcast. General de Gaulle assured them of his approval of the landings, confirmed the statements made in his broadcast the previous evening, and stated his only purpose was the salvation of France. He would support any action that would contribute to bringing a united France into the war.[9] General de Gaulle in his Mémoires says Admiral Stark at this time agreed to the sending of a mission to North Africa.[10] However, there is no American record of such an agreement at that time. Later that day Colonels Billotte and Lombard, of General de Gaulle's staff, called on Kittredge and suggested such a mission to obtain the fusion of all the French in support of Allied operations.[11]

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8. The Speeches of General de Gaulle, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 173.

9. Kittredge memorandum, November 10, 1942, Document 3, COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

10. De Gaulle, Unity, p. 50.

11. Tracy B. Kittredge, MSS Diary, November 9, 1942, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, files (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU files), Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

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The next morning, November 10, Major Desmond Morton personal assistant to the Prime Minister, told Kittredge that he approved of the sending of a Fighting French mission to North Africa and that the best approach would be for General de Gaulle to write a letter to Churchill formally proposing it and asking American concurrence. After talking to Ambassador John G. Winant, Admiral Stark and Colonel Waite agreed that all communications concerning the North African situation and operations there should be conveyed by the Prime Minister or by the Ambassador to the President. Within the hour, Kittredge called on René Pleven, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, and Colonel Billotte to transmit this suggestion. By late afternoon General de Gaulle had sent such a letter to the Prime Minister with a copy to Admiral Stark. American military and Embassy officials agreed that the final decisions on all matters affecting North African operations must be made by the field commander, General Eisenhower, in agreement with the President and the Combined Chiefs of Staff.[12] In expressing Admiral Stark's thanks to General de Gaulle for the copy of the letter he sent to Churchill, Kittredge informed the General that Admiral Darlan had agreed to the cessation of all hostilities in North Africa.[13]

Major Morton assured Commander Kittredge and Colonel Waite

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12. Ibid.

13. Kittredge to de Gaulle, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 2.

on November 11 that the British Government had proposed to the President a mission by General de Gaulle personally or by his delegates to North Africa to discuss unification of French forces.[14] Indeed, Churchill sent a personal message that day to the President endorsing this proposal and warning of the dangers of rival emigré factions.[15]

By the next morning, November 12, the President had replied to the Prime Minister's dispatches. He agreed that a Fighting French mission be authorized to visit North Africa on two conditions. First, instructions to the members of the mission must be communicated to the American and British Governments before their departure. Second, any agreements reached in North Africa which would affect the situation there in any way should receive General Eisenhower's approval. Major Morton confirmed that General de Gaulle had been informed of the President's reply.[16]

Following receipt of the President's reply, General de Gaulle requested Admiral Stark call on him later that day to discuss the current situation in North Africa.[17] He inquired as to future United States policy and he discussed objectively and, as Kittredge noted,

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14. Kittredge memorandum, November 10, 1942, Document 5, COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

15. Churchill, Winston S. The Hinge of Fate, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), p. 630.

16. Kittredge Diary, November 12, 1942.

17. Kittredge memorandum, November 12, 1942, Document 12, COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

philosophically, the future role of the French in collaborating with the Allies in the conduct of operations from North Africa.

General de Gaulle observed that reports of military operations and incidental developments had been confused and contradictory. He understood the necessity confronting the American commanders for reducing local opposition inspired by Vichy orders and for supervising local administration. However, he did not understand the appointment of a French General by American authorities to command French troops and the American attitude towards Admiral Darlan's broadcast. This speech by the Vichy-designated Commander-in-Chief in North Africa implied the French there would enjoy neutral status. Despite the strategic soundness of the invasion, military considerations formed only part of the total picture, which included the impact of American acts in North Africa on French opinion. General de Gaulle's most recent information indicated that French opinion was greatly troubled.

The General distinguished two phases in the Allies' acts. The first phase concerned the appointment of General Giraud as military and civil head of the North African forces and administration. In the second phase, General Giraud was not mentioned and some sort of a deal of a provisional nature seemed to have been made with Admiral Darlan.

Admiral Stark regretted he had no detailed information on the current conversations in North Africa. Originally the American authorities had counted on gaining many advantages from the presence

of General Giraud in North Africa. He had learned with surprise from the press that the Americans were negotiating with Admiral Darlan, but he felt there was no intention to recognize his authority for any extended period of time.

General de Gaulle explained he felt General Giraud was a great force that had been wasted, if only because he held command from a foreign military authority. He reminded Admiral Stark that the French National Committee was supported by French public opinion and held authority only from France. He paid homage to the perfection with which Operation TORCH had been planned and executed.

This conversation marked the end of the period in which General de Gaulle and the Fighting French envisaged an immediate agreement with General Giraud to unify French forces. General de Gaulle was aware that something was going on in regard to Admiral Darlan in Algiers. He would have to wait until the next day to find out what it was.

November 13 came on Friday in 1942 and to the Fighting French in London it must have seemed that everything turned sour that day. At nine o'clock in the morning Admiral Darlan made a second broadcast from Algiers. In the first broadcast two days before, he called on all French forces in North Africa to cease fighting the Allies. But in his second broadcast he stated that he, as French High Commissioner, had assumed responsibility for French interests in Africa, with the approval of the American authorities with whom he was collaborating.

He called on Governors and residents to remain at their posts to ensure the administration of their territories. He stated he was acting in accordance with the Marshal's wishes. He concluded with "Vive le Maréchal."[18]

This broadcast signified that the invading Allies, represented by General Mark Clark, had reached an agreement at least in principle with the local French officials who held their offices by virtue of prior Vichy appointments and who would continue to remain in power. The Allies particularly the United States had made a deal with an odious regime headed by the almost universally despised and distrusted Admiral Darlan whose reputation was that of an opportunist and whose loyalties ran more to the French Navy than to France or to the Allied cause. Kittredge noted that the announcement of the Clark-Darlan agreement created consternation and evoked violent criticism in Fighting French and Allied circles in London.[19]

At lunch that day René Cassin, National Commissioner of Justice and legal advisor to General de Gaulle, told Kittredge the General suspected the Americans of intending a partial or de facto recognition in North Africa of the Vichy Government, with Darlan as the Marshal's representative. Cassin said the French in London were painfully

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18. Kittredge memorandum, November 17, 1942, Document 23 (a) in COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

19. Kittredge memorandum, November 17, 1942, Document 23 (a) , COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

impressed by the names of the French in North Africa with whom the Americans were in contact, particularly Temple, the Prefect of Algiers. This man was one of Laval's most ardent disciples who had been sent to North Africa in 1941 to place all liberals and democratic leaders in prison or in concentration camps. Many hundreds were still locked up. The French were amazed that the Americans should give their approval to the acts of the past year or so, and should keep the person responsible head of civil administration in Algiers.[20]

This deeply felt, but well-articulated and somewhat restrained reproach by Cassin, typified the grounds upon which the Darlan deal was attacked in London and in the United States. It is true that Darlan and his Vichy gang were incompatible on ideological and general political grounds with the United States. But the inescapable fact, ignored by the critics in the ensuing uproar, was that Darlan and company controlled North Africa. It was true the Allies had the capability of ousting them, which would have required the institution of a military government and quite probably extensive mopping up operations. Faced with the choice of setting up a military government, or coming to terms with Darlan, so he could prosecute the war against the Axis, General Eisenhower chose to pursue the military objective: the expulsion of the Axis from North Africa.[21]

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20. Kittredge memorandum, November 14, 1942, Document 18, COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

21. Eisenhower, Dwight D., Crusade in Europe, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), p. 131.

There has been little dispute that the alternative choice would have been costly in time, casualties and loss of equipment.[22] The criticism grew from outrage and indignation that the Americans should come to terms with the likes of Darlan and the Vichy gang in North Africa. This criticism was voiced by persons, including the Fighting French, who bore no responsibility for the prosecution of action against the Axis in North Africa.

The criticism of the Fighting French was not that of an irresponsible group of men who realized they had been frustrated in an attempt to participate in civil and military arrangements in North Africa. It was based upon fundamental grounds of political legitimacy. The Gaullist position since the 1940 Armistice had been consistently that their movement represented the real France, the true France which had been betrayed by Marshal Pétain and his associates. They claimed the support of the French people, in addition to drawing on a mystique of France. Certainly the purported transfers of authority from Darlan to Noguès and back to Darlan and the comical but really pitiful claims that Darlan and others were carrying out the real wishes of the Marshal, who was unable to express them, created a cloud, to

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22. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox to Stark, November 18, 1942, in COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 33. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson told Knox that General Patton was alarmed at the possibility of an uprising of tribes in Morocco, which was apparently forestalled by the cooperation of Darlan and others. Had it occurred, Patton estimated that 60,000 troops would have been required to quell it.

say the least, upon their claims to legitimacy. The issue that arose between the Fighting French and the United States had its origin in two unrelated concepts and sets of considerations which clashed under the circumstances in North Africa in November, 1942.

This emotional atmosphere was further charged by the decision of the French National Committee on November 14 to postpone indefinitely the sending of the mission to North Africa and to issue a communique dissociating Fighting France from the arrangements made in North Africa. Charles Peake, Head of the British Mission to Fighting France, persuaded the National Committee to delay issuing their communique pending receipt of important information Churchill expected from Washington, to prevent at least a public display of dissension.[23]

Later that afternoon General de Gaulle sent two resistance leaders to see Admiral Stark. They were known by their assumed names as M. Bernard (Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie) and M. Chevret (François de Menthon). The purpose of their visit was to ask advice on going to North Africa and to discuss the general situation there. They did not agree with the decision to postpone the mission to North Africa and if Admiral Stark could assure them the United States did not intend to maintain the Vichy regime permanently, and favored the unification of French war efforts, they would discuss with General de Gaulle the possibility of proceeding independently to North Africa.[24]

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23. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout, vol. 1., p. 19.

24. Kittredge Diary, November 14, 1942.

Admiral Stark made it plain to Bernard and Chevret, as he had to General de Gaulle, that any field commander had of necessity to deal with the people on the spot. Any officer in General Eisenhower's position would welcome Darlan's action in ordering the cease fire and in collaborating with the invaders, regardless of his past political acts and former status. Kittredge reported that Bernard and Chevret heartily agreed.[25]

They inquired as to the attitude of the United States Government towards Darlan, who claimed authority both from Vichy and the Allied Commander. The situation was not clear to Admiral Stark, and it was equally unclear to the Frenchmen. Although they would welcome an opportunity to meet Giraud, they could only insult Darlan if they were to meet him. The Admiral observed there were enough troubles without going out of the way to create new ones. He pointed out that the task of defeating Hitler was the important task to which all others should be subordinated. Bernard and Chevret saw the Admiral's point and he asked them to convey it to General de Gaulle.

Following this conversation, which he found very satisfactory from every standpoint, Admiral Stark wrote to General de Gaulle for the record. He reiterated the point that military considerations had made it necessary and inevitable that the Allies had to deal with the people "found on the spot and to deal with them quickly in order to

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25. Ibid.

avoid all unnecessary shedding of blood. That, as I view it, is what has happened to date."[26] Before delivery to General de Gaulle, the text was shown to Ambassador Winant, and to Charles Peake of the Foreign Office. General de Gaulle received the letter before an interview with Peake, at which time he agreed to a 24 hour delay in the issuance of the National Committee's communique.

In London, Sunday, November 15, was devoted to many comings and goings in and between the American and British offices. British leaders met at Chequers that afternoon with the Prime Minister and General Walter B. Smith, General Eisenhower's Chief of Staff.[27] Elsewhere, Admiral Darlan broadcast from Algiers that Marshal Petain was no longer a free agent. He appealed to all those who had sworn loyalty to the Marshal to consider their oath could be discharged by following the Admiral's orders. General Clark in another broadcast spoke of the pleasure of concluding an agreement with Admiral Darlan to help drive the enemies of France out of Africa. Another appeal was made by General Giraud for support of the North African operations. Finally, a broadcast from the United States to France used the Gaullist motto "Honneur et Patrie" and quoted messages from Admiral Darlan and Admiral Auboyneau, head of the Free French Navy, urging the French fleet at Toulon to come over to the Allies. The tenor of the broadcast made it seem to have been originated or at

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26. Stark to de Gaulle, November 14, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 18.

27. Kittredge Diary, November 15, 1942.

least inspired by the Fighting French.[28] General de Gaulle felt this broadcast, which was rebroadcast by the BBC was a "moral swindle."[29]

These broadcasts only confirmed the worst fears of the French National Committee and of General de Gaulle in particular. Not only had they been unable to enter into any position of political power in North Africa, but, as the Gaullists saw it, the Americans had given their support in French territory to those men who had betrayed France since 1940 by continued support of the illegitimate Vichy regime.

Officially, the French National Committee reacted by dispatching Pleven to Admiral Stark with a formal protest against the agreements with Darlan. The letter contained the text of a note sent to the Allied governments dissociating the National Committee from the negotiations under way in North Africa. The Fighting French could not accept any arrangements which would in effect consecrate the Vichy regime in North Africa.[30] Pleven requested the transmission of his note to the United States Government. Admiral Stark forwarded it to Winant for transmittal to the State Department, if he thought it advisable.[31]

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28. Kittredge memorandum, November 17, 1942, Document 23 (a), COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

29. De Gaulle, Charles, Unity-Documents, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 91.

30. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout, vol. 2, pp. 18-19.

31. Stark to Winant, November 16, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 22.

In a personal letter to Admiral Stark, General de Gaulle said, "I understand the United States buys the treachery of traitors, if this appears profitable, but payment must not be made out of the honor of France."[32] The Admiral's immediate reaction was to return the letter and therefore to ignore it. Kittredge discussed the matter informally with Winant who agreed with him. Immediately following a meeting of Winant and Admiral Stark the next day, Kittredge and the Army liaison officer, Major Richard Walker, returned General de Gaulle's letter to him personally. They explained verbally that it must have been sent in error, unless it was the intention of the General to render impossible further conversations with representatives of the United States Government and armed forces. Within hours, General de Gaulle sent a member of his staff, Gaston Palewski, to Admiral Stark personally to convey regrets that the letter had been sent and to express appreciation that the Admiral had been charitable enough to return it without comment.

It is unfortunate that this letter was ever published, because it did no one any good and served only the mischievous purpose of heightening a tense series of events already charged with too much emotional content as it was. Soustelle published it first and since then it has been included in the standard works on the period.[33]

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32. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout, vol. 2, p. 19.

33. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout; Funk, Arthur Layton, Charles de Gaulle: The Crucial Years 1943-1944, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959).

Admiral Stark felt it was not typical of General de Gaulle's usual gentlemanly demeanor and it was out of character with their usually cordial and frank relationship. He supposed members of the General's staff were able to talk him into sending it as a result of his understandable frustration, disappointment and even bitterness at the turn of events in North Africa. Credence for this view is found in the leak of the substance of the letter to the press, which Admiral Stark felt was the act of some unauthorized individual.[34]

Meanwhile, General de Gaulle lunched again with Churchill and Eden on November 16. He remained firm in his refusal to be a party to any arrangement, however, temporary, which gave authority to Darlan. He said not even the military advantage immediately gained could justify dealings with a traitor. Churchill urged the General to delay issuing a public statement for at least a day or two, which he declined to do on grounds that he had already withheld his communique. The General did not blame Churchill and Eden, but he remained firm and they did not insist further.[35] A communique was then issued which summarized the Fighting French position.

Churchill was disturbed by the deal with Darlan and said so in a

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34. Stark to de Gaulle, November 23, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 24.

35. The Earl of Avon, (Anthony Eden), The Reckoning, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 430.

personal message to the President. Rather than attack it in principle as General de Gaulle had done, he urged that "it be only a temporary expedient justifiable by the stress of battle."[36] He reminded the President of the possible serious political injury that could be done to the common cause by the feeling the Allies were ready to deal with local Quislings. The Foreign Office parallelled Churchill's message with a cable in a similar vein to the Embassy in Washington and asked that their views be conveyed to the American Government.[37]

President Roosevelt clarified the position of the United States with a cogent explanation of the deal with Darlan. His statement was transmitted first to Churchill and then released to the press on November 17.[38] He accepted only temporarily the political arrangements made in North Africa. No permanent arrangements should be made with Admiral Darlan and the Vichy Government should not be reconstituted anywhere. Future political arrangements for the French people would be made by them, freely after their liberation. The President justified this temporary expedient solely by the stress of battle. It had not only prevented bloodshed, but it had also allowed the time that would have been spent in mopping up operations to be spent in pursuing the Axis.

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36. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, (6 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964) vol. 2, p. 445.

37. Ibid., pp. 446-447.

38. Department of State Bulletin, vol. 7, November 21, 1942, p. 935.

He noted that French troops under General Giraud were already in action in Tunisia. Finally, he requested the liberation of all political prisoners and the abrogation of Nazi-inspired Vichy legislation.

One immediate effect of the President's statement was General de Gaulle's cancellation of a press conference scheduled for Wednesday, November 18, at which time Admiral Stark understood the General would have been "rough - to put it mildy."[39] This was a successful culmination of American efforts to contain or at least to limit the effects of the understandably vehement Fighting French objections to the arrangements made with Admiral Darlan. Winant felt that prior to the President's statement, Admiral Stark had successfully acted as a buffer to keep General de Gaulle more or less in line at least publicly,[40]

Admiral Stark pointed out to General de Gaulle that the President's statement confirmed certain interpretations of events the Admiral had given him recently, when he sent an official copy to the General, and that the prime objective was still to drive the Germans and Italians out of North Africa as quickly as possible.[41] It was apparent that the only guide to the future course of events was the fixed policy and intentions of those holding the power of decision in Washington and in London. Admiral Stark tactfully did not make this necessary reminder to General

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39. Stark to Knox, November 18, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 32.

40. Stark to Knox, November 16, 1942, COMNAVEU documents, vol. 2, p. 20.

41. Stark to de Gaulle, November 18, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 25.

le Gaulle but rather to René Pleven, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. He added that it was fortunate such a power of final decision rested in the hands of the President and Prime Minister.[42]

Even after a crisis had passed the boiling point and was seemingly resolved, General de Gaulle usually tried to have the last word. This pattern was apparent in this instance and would appear again later on. A telegram apparently from all resistance organizations, as well as statements from labor syndicates and political parties in France, was addressed to the American and British Governments. It protested vehemently the Allied association with Admiral Darlan.[43] General of the Air Force François d'Astier de la Vigerie, and the trade union delegate, Léon Moranda, who had left France on the night of November 17-18, and who had wide contacts there, brought personal testimony to Admiral Stark of the opposition of French public opinion to the Clark-Darlan agreement.[44] While the object of these communications was probably to have the last word, they also tended to establish a claim for a base of popular metropolitan French support for General de Gaulle's position, if not for his movement.

A second and more significant effect of the President's statement

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42. Stark to Pleven, November 18, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 27.

43. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 94.

44. Kittredge Diary, November 20, 1942.

on General de Gaulle was the inquiry made by Pleven and Palewski to Kittredge early on Wednesday, November 18, as to whether President Roosevelt would receive André Philip, National Commissioner for the Interior, who was then in Ottawa. So far the President had not received the Fighting French delegate in Washington, Adrien Tixier. This inquiry was referred to Admiral Stark, who informed Winant and suggested he cable Washington. Winant, however, advised Admiral Stark to cable Secretary of the Navy Knox concerning the possibility of a visit by Philip to the President. Admiral Stark did so.[45]

Within six hours Knox replied that the President would see Philip the next day, Thursday, November 19 or the following day.[46] Using the U.S. Naval Communications facilities, General de Gaulle directed Philip to go to Washington immediately and to inform Knox of the time of his arrival to permit arrangements for an interview with the President.[47] Admiral Stark reported to Knox General de Gaulle's appreciation of the prompt action taken on his request.[48]

While Philip was enroute from Ottawa to Washington, General de Gaulle on November 19 requested an interview with Admiral Stark for

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45. COMNAVEU message 181701Z November 1942, COMNAVEU Files, London No. 1, Top Drawer, HI COM Dispatches.

46. Secretary of the Navy message 190115Z November 1942.

47. Stark to Knox message, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 30.

48. Ibid.

an important communication. The General refused an invitation to call at the Admiral's office and insisted the Admiral call at Carlton Gardens, the Fighting French headquarters. Cancelling a number of other appointments, Admiral Stark arrived at General de Gaulle's office late in the afternoon, only to be read a statement on a trivial matter which of itself did not seem to warrant a personal meeting. Admiral Stark felt the purpose of the meeting was not its substance, but rather that General de Gaulle wanted to see whether Admiral Stark would call on him in view of what had transpired between them in the past few days.[49]

André Philip met the President on Friday, November 20. The interview was not a success. Philip and Tixier bluntly told the President that his policy of deciding what, if any, Frenchmen would govern liberated territory until the liberation of metropolitan France was unacceptable to the National Committee. The President and Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles were exasperated that after 50 minutes of conversation, neither Frenchman had expressed the slightest gratitude or recognition of the American liberation of North Africa, but rather insisted that its administration be turned over to the National Committee within two or three weeks. The only positive note of the conversation was an expression by the President of the usefulness of talks with General de Gaulle and that

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49. Kittredge Diary, November 19, 1942.

he would be glad to talk with the General if he could come to Washington.[50]

The third and final immediate effect of the President's statement of November 17 was what Admiral Stark perceived to be a reversal of the attitude of the National Committee within 24 hours of the statement. When Kittredge spoke with Pleven and Palewski on the morning of

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50. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, vol. 2, pp. 546-547.

An interesting sidelight to this first meeting of the President with a representative of the French National Committee is that it was the second time one was scheduled. Welles had arranged a meeting of the President with Tixier, at his request, for November 7. This meeting was the result of the transmittal of a letter from General de Gaulle to the President via Tixier and Welles. The letter contained a long, but eloquent and moving statement by the General of his position and that of the French National Committee. The President returned the letter to Welles and agreed to meet Tixier. The meeting never took place, because, as Welles pointed out, Tixier never showed up. No other reference to this meeting has been found, not even an indication of its cancellation. There is no known explanation of why it never took place. Welles to Roosevelt, October 27, 1942, and Roosevelt to Welles, October 29, 1942, U.S. National Archives, Department of States, 851.01/400-3/6. Also, Welles memorandum of November 6, 1942, 851.01/400-5/6.

In referring to General de Gaulle's letter, the desk officer commented to Welles that "it is two years too late and takes ten pages of introduction to get down to the very little meat there is in it." This comment must rank as one of the most pedestrian comments ever made by a State Department officer. It is comparable to calling Cyrano de Bergerac's panache a feather. The State Department was at least consistent in its view, because it did not publish the first ten pages. For the full text see de Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 66 ff.

November 18, Palewski also inquired as to whether the United States Government and military command would approve of the French National Committee designating General Giraud as the Free French High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief in North Africa.[51] Admiral Stark saw this as an indication the French were ready "to start playing ball again."[52] He noted to Knox that it had not come to him officially, so no action was necessary.[53] Apparently the suggestion was never made officially, but its unofficial mention was cause for optimism.

This inquiry may have been a good omen. But any optimism Admiral Stark may have felt was diluted by his sober reflections on relations with General de Gaulle. It was important that General de Gaulle realize the necessity for the utmost speed of the Allied advance into Tunisia and for assuring a square deal for all Frenchmen in North Africa. General de Gaulle should be told in no uncertain terms of the situation in North Africa, he wrote Winant on November 20. Since any statements to the General should have the approval of the Prime Minister, Churchill or Eden would be the logical choices. But, he would speak to General de Gaulle with great pleasure, if authorized.[54]

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51. Kittredge Diary, November 18, 1942.

52. Stark to Winant, November 18, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 29.

53. Stark to Knox, November 18, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 32.

54. Stark to Winant, November 20, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 34.

The substance of what Admiral Stark thought General de Gaulle should be told was that upon arrival in North Africa, General Giraud found himself without support and urged General Eisenhower to make arrangements with Admiral Darlan, whose presence and subsequent role were as much a surprise to the Americans as to everyone else. Eisenhower dealt with Darlan out of sheer military necessity. Not only could and did Darlan terminate French opposition, but he also assured French support of the Allied mission. Only Darlan could provide any hope of neutralizing the French fleet and possibly delivering it to the Allies. General de Gaulle's influence in North Africa was zero and to use his name would only have inspired opposition. Finally, General de Gaulle should be told that political prisoners were being released.

Admiral Stark felt it necessary to enlist the active cooperation of General de Gaulle in the Allied effort, not only for the practical reasons of military necessity, but also for the psychological reason of giving him something positive to do in place of brooding on his so far very real frustrations.

An example of the type of frustration that may not have been important by itself, but did little to foster harmony, was a complaint General de Gaulle made on November 21 to Admiral Stark. He complained that Radio Algiers had reported concentrations of Fighting French forces at Tchad. He protested this divulgence of plans of a French military operation and asked for an explanation. Since Admiral

Stark was out of town, it was Kittredge who referred the matter to the Allied Headquarters Staff, [55] which reported that inasmuch as the French had not disclosed their plans to the Allied Staff, no security stop had been placed on information which might be published from sources not under their control. As a result of this complaint, censors were then assigned to Radio Algiers and instructed to "exercise the same precautionary censorship of Fighting French operational moves as is imposed on our own."[56]

In his Mémoires, General de Gaulle complains of the censors in Washington, and particularly of their influence in preventing his use of the BBC broadcasting facilities on November 21. He states that Charles Peake told him that American consent was required for his broadcast and that it had been requested, but not received, for which the British Government profoundly apologized.[57] Kittredge, however, reported that Peake told him that the General's statement in the evening of November 21 had been referred to the Prime Minister only that afternoon. Churchill refused authorization, presumably because the statement was an attack on Allied North African policy.[58]

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55. Kittredge to de Gaulle, November 21, 1942, Document 29 (a), COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

56. Stark to de Gaulle, November 23, 1942, Document 31, COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

57. De Gaulle, Unity, p. 60.

58. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 92.

Although neither documentation nor references were found that would explain Churchill's reasons, it is not unreasonable to assume with General de Gaulle that Churchill may have wanted to refer the substantive question of policy to Washington to avoid embarrassing the United States. General de Gaulle admitted as much.[59] This conclusion is more reasonable than the one of censorship, assigned by General de Gaulle. The United States may have irritated and frustrated him on several occasions, but these are insufficient grounds for such an accusation. The prohibition came from Churchill, whatever the reason he may have had in mind, and not from the United States.

By then, Saturday, November 21, General de Gaulle had something positive with which to occupy himself. Dispatches had arrived from Washington and had reported the President's intimation that he would be willing to see General de Gaulle. Officers of the General's military staff informed Kittredge of the dispatches from Washington, which included indications from the French point of view of a satisfactory interview of Philip with the President. Kittredge was told the matter was under discussion by General de Gaulle's staff and might be formally submitted to Admiral Stark on November 23.[60]

Colonel Lombard of General de Gaulle's staff gave Kittredge advance notice on Sunday, November 22, of the General's plans to visit

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59. Ibid., p. 104.

60. Kittredge Diary, November 21, 1942.

Washington. He said the General would seek the advice of Admiral Stark and Colonel Waite on the details of the voyage. Monday evening, Lombard informed Kittredge that plans were being made for the almost immediate departure of General de Gaulle. The President had suggested that he visit Washington before December 15 or after January 8. The earlier period appeared preferable. Lombard discussed details with Kittredge, such as whether an American officer would be designated to accompany the General and his party as guide and interpreter.[61]

Meanwhile, Kittredge and Colonel Waite had conferred on Monday morning with Charles Peake, the British representative to the National Committee. Peake confirmed the identity of American and British policy in the matter of General de Gaulle's visit to the United States. He noted that although final powers rested in Washington, the British shared responsibility for actions taken in North Africa. He affirmed that the British would approve of General de Gaulle's visit to Washington.[62]

Following unanimous approval on Tuesday, November 24, by the French National Committee of his visit to Washington, General de Gaulle urgently requested Admiral Stark to call on him that afternoon.[63] No word from Washington had been received in London concerning the

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61. Kittredge memorandum, November 24, 1942, Document 32 (a), COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

62. Kittredge Diary, November 23, 1942.

63. Kittredge Diary, November 24, 1942.

visit of General de Gaulle. All Admiral Stark and Kittredge knew was what the French had told them. Before going to meet General de Gaulle, Admiral Stark cabled the Secretary of the Navy and requested information as to whether an invitation had been extended and if so what arrangements were suggested.[64]

Later that afternoon General de Gaulle informed Admiral Stark that the President in his conversation with André Philip had invited him to visit Washington. Philip reported that in a subsequent conversation with Sumner Welles he was told the visit should be before December 15 or after January 8. The General felt that recent developments made an early visit advisable. He would greatly appreciate the Admiral's advice on the organization and plans of his visit. His tentative plans were to arrive in Washington between December 8 and 10, and to spend approximately a week there and then a few days in New York before returning to London. He planned to take only three or four persons in his party.

Since he had received neither instructions nor information from Washington, Admiral Stark could only agree in principle with the General's suggestions. If the invitation were confirmed, he would be glad to facilitate arrangements for the trip. He declined to give advice as to who should accompany the General, but he did suggest visiting various centers of war activity, after first going to Washington.

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64. COMNAVEU message to Secretary of the Navy, 241656Z November, 1942.

Although at their meeting, Admiral Stark declined to make substantive comments on General de Gaulle's proposed visit and although he was unable to commit himself to specific arrangements, he commented to Knox about French affairs in anticipation of General de Gaulle's visit.[65] He gave full credit to General Eisenhower for conducting a magnificently successful operation. He states that no responsible officer would have acted otherwise in regard to Darlan. While not forgiving Darlan for what he had done before, the Admiral recognized that the fact stood out that Darlan had kept the French fleet out of German hands. Whatever else may be said about him, that fact was of historical record. Also, Darlan, once he decided to climb on board the Allied bandwagon, gained the support of the North African French for the Allies by invoking the fiction that what he was doing was really the will of Marshal Pétain, who, as a prisoner of the Germans, was unable to give him open support. He wrote, "Any defense of Darlan is hardly mentioned; I just thought I'd start something." He stopped to think what would have happened had there been no Darlan and concluded the fighting would still be in progress and a military occupation of North Africa would have been necessary. He also thought that General de Gaulle as a soldier would have done the same thing had their positions been reversed. He concluded by urging no hurry in deciding whom to back for French High Commissioner in North Africa. He felt

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65. Stark to Knox, November 16, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 20.

the French people should decide, but it was a nice question of how they would decide. He admitted he did not have the answer.

Admiral Stark's uncertainty was ended with a cable dated November 25 from Admiral Leahy, Chief of Staff to the President: no invitation had been issued to General de Gaulle to visit Washington.[66] Winant received details by telephone. It was officially clear that General de Gaulle was going to the United States on his own initiative, but in response to an expressed willingness of the President to receive him should he arrive.

Strong impersonal forces and deeply rooted political interests may underlie historical events, but those same events unfold as a result of the actions of men whose personalities color events and can often transform them. To Admiral Stark, General de Gaulle appeared on November 26 as the right man at the right time, but the Admiral was unsure how the General would appear the next day or under a different set of circumstances.[67] The Admiral's perplexity was understandable in light of the several unpleasant and irritating incidents since the commencement of Operation TORCH.

At General de Gaulle's urgent request, Admiral Stark received him on November 26 before attending Thanksgiving services at Westminster Abbey. This was apparently a fence mending visit. The

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66. Leahy to Stark, (Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet message 252035Z, November, 1942).

67. Stark to Knox, November 27, 1942, in COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 43.

General first expressed his own good wishes and those of the National Committee on the occasion of Thanksgiving Day. He said that he and practically all the French understood the war aims and efforts of the United States and that unity of purpose should not be diluted by transitory differences over methods and strategy to achieve common aims.

The present disastrous situation, the General continued, was of tragic significance. It led the French to place particular emphasis on questions of morale and policy. They may occasionally over emphasize such considerations, as he had done, and express themselves in a manner that might irritate or offend their American friends. (Was this an apology?) But he hoped nothing would weaken the traditional friendship of the French and American people. He had profound confidence in the intentions and leadership of President Roosevelt. More than a military victory and a military decision must be sought in the war. The ultimate outcome of the war must not jeopardize the purpose and objectives for which the masses were then struggling. This victory must open a new way for moral as well as political progress.

A new France was coming into existence, and the General strongly emphasized the necessity of maintaining its essential structure intact and unified. The Americans must not be misled by the former leaders who may have represented the France of 1918, but who did not represent the France of 1942. Officers, officials and colonists were apt to cling to old traditions, but the new emerging France would be more liberal and democratic than the old. Here was the

driving force of the resistance movement in France, and it was the reason particular importance had to be attached to the moral, political and social consequences of the Allied war program and effort. It was also the reason the Americans ought to weigh carefully any actions or expressions bearing upon France.

Admiral Stark shared the view of the necessity of unity and the importance of avoiding futile irritations. He noted that American war aims were not limited to military victory alone, but encompassed the creation of conditions conducive to human progress and happiness.[68]

With this eloquent and rational statement of the Fighting French position as a start, Admiral Stark proceeded on a round of official duties which brought him into contact with King George, King Haakon of Norway and the Prime Minister. Churchill was delighted at the prospect of General de Gaulle's trip to Washington. He hoped the President would like him, at least a little, because it would help. Knowing both the General and the President personally, Churchill hoped General de Gaulle would not antagonize the President.[69]

The Admiral discussed a letter Darlan had written to General Eisenhower with Churchill, Eden, The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, and General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. In this letter Darlan said the story was current that

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68. Kittredge memorandum of conversation, November 26, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2. p. 41.

69. Stark to Knox, November 27, 1942.

he was being used as a lemon and, when squeezed dry, would be discarded. He acted not for personal gain, but only, he said, for the good of his country when the Germans violated the Armistice. When possible he intended to lay down the burdens of office and retire to private life.[70]

Admiral Stark thought General de Gaulle should read the letter. General Brooke and Admiral Pound agreed. The Prime Minister felt it would do no good. Admiral Stark replied that, whether it did or not, it would be a good idea for General de Gaulle "to get the picture" and besides it would at least acquaint General de Gaulle with Darlan's point of view. He commented to Knox that he doubted it would be shown to General de Gaulle at least in London and left open the possibility of disclosure by the President.[71]

King Haakon of Norway apparently engaged Admiral Stark in some spirited conversation. The King sympathized with General de Gaulle's stand and voiced approval of it. What Admiral Stark said was not recorded, but presumably he made a strong case for Allied unity, for he felt he made the King "see the light of day before we finished. . . ."[72]

Charles Peake told Admiral Stark on November 27 that he too was somewhat exasperated by General de Gaulle's recent mood, which was wholly understandable in the light of his recently disappointed hopes

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70. Churchill, The Hinge of Fate, p. 648.

71. Stark to Knox, November 27, 1942.

72. Ibid.

and his frustrations, although Peake certainly did not see it that way. Since he had no responsible appropriate activity, the General spent much of his time making irritable complaints about British and American policy and he was open to influence by malcontents in his own camp, as well as to mischief by Bogomoloff, the Soviet Ambassador.[73] In this respect, Peake's insight coincided with Admiral Stark's estimate of how the treachery letter of November 15 happened to be sent in the first place.

On the basis of his experience with General de Gaulle, Peake felt the President should discuss several questions with the General. First, unity of French participation in the war should be established as soon as possible. Second, a political leader such as Herriot acceptable to all pro-Allied and patriotic Frenchmen, should be found and brought out of France to head a new National Committee. Third, a suitable military command should be found for General de Gaulle. He felt the General could not and would not decline, and it would redirect his energies.[74]

Shortly after Peake left Admiral Stark's office, General Catroux, Fighting French High Commissioner in Syria, was shown in. Catroux, although senior in rank to General de Gaulle, had voluntarily placed himself under the General's command. Admiral Stark liked him

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73. Kittredge memorandum, November 27, 1942, Document 36, COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

74. Ibid.

immediately. He felt the President would like talking to Catroux and told Knox so.[75]

Catroux agreed that General Eisenhower had taken the only action possible in dealing with Darlan, but for sound military, naval and political reasons these arrangements should not endure beyond their absolute necessity. They should be replaced by measures designed to assure the security of the military position in North Africa and the unity of French forces which was necessary for their effective participation in the war. He felt the revival of France as a nation must start with an effective French contribution to the liberation of France. Such a contribution could come about only by an active and unified re-entry into the war of all Frenchmen in a position to act.

A Darlan regime in North Africa posed certain military dangers, Catroux continued. Darlan had not actively entered the war on the Allied side, but he had only adopted a passive neutrality in defense of North Africa. Darlan was Mme. Catroux's cousin and Catroux had known him for many years. He thought Darlan was an opportunist who was motivated by personal ambition. Darlan could not be trusted with the security of the Allied rear in North Africa. Replacement of Darlan and and other Vichy appointees by men known to be loyal to the Allies would result in greater security of the Allied rear and, hence, greater liberty of military action. It would also foster unity among Frenchmen who

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75. Stark to Knox, November 27, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 43.

were willing to give active support to the Allied cause.

Catroux greatly impressed Admiral Stark with his sound sense and realistic and ethical outlook. One reason General de Gaulle asked Catroux to call on Admiral Stark was to get the Admiral's reaction as to whether Catroux ought to go to Washington with him. Admiral Stark thought most decidedly it would be a good idea. He also thought General Marshall would enjoy having a long talk with him.[76]

Plans for General de Gaulle's transportation to the United States, along with four members of his staff, were proceeding apace. It was intended that the Fighting French party leave England about December 1 on one of the Queens. Arrangements were being made in the utmost secrecy. Admiral Stark placed General de Gaulle on 24 hours notice to depart.[77] Admiral Stark cabled Knox on November 27 the substance of arrangements made and indicated General de Gaulle could arrive in the United States about December 6, and inquired whether that was satisfactory. He also included General de Gaulle's expression the previous day that the fundamental unity of purpose of the French and Americans must not be confused by irritations resulting from differences as to method and strategy. Winant joined in the drafting of that message and requested it be shown to the President and to Hull.[78] No reply having

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76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Stark to Knox message, 271213Z November 1942.

been received the next day, November 28, Admiral Stark dispatched another message to Knox and requested to know if the arrangements as made were satisfactory.[79]

A reply was received on Sunday, November 29, from Admiral Leahy in his capacity as the President's Chief of Staff. He said unforeseen developments made it necessary to postpone General de Gaulle's visit until after January 9, 1943, at which time the President would reserve the necessary time to see him.[80] Exactly what the unforeseen events were was not clear, but Leahy indicated elsewhere the President did not particularly want to see General de Gaulle and that the Joint Chiefs had advised the President that if he saw General de Gaulle, it might seriously affect the Tunisian campaign then in progress. This postponement was made in the face of strong domestic pressure by those who feared Darlan's allegedly fascist attitude.[81]

Upon receipt of Admiral Leahy's message, Admiral Stark by telephone directed his staff to inform the Foreign Office and General de Gaulle. Kittredge informed the General Sunday morning, November 29. The General accepted the postponement graciously, indeed he could not do otherwise, but surprisingly enough, he also expressed full agree-

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79. Stark to Knox message, 281446Z November 1942.

80. Leahy to Stark message, November 29, 1942, in COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 51.

81. Leahy, William D., I Was There, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1950), p. 136.

ment.[82] A message report was made to Washington, along with an indication that plans were being made for a January visit.[83]

The real reason General de Gaulle agreed so readily to a postponement of his visit to Washington was revealed in a telegram to Tixier. The Americans were unaware of its contents. The General felt the British were giving him weak support, which meant Roosevelt and Churchill were more or less in agreement. He feared the President would flourish a plan for a "Committee for Co-ordination of French Affairs" with headquarters in Washington. Thus the General would be placed in the awkward position where refusal would make him appear to obstruct the war effort and acceptance would cause the French to lose their best opinion of him. It was better, he said, to gain time and allow things to take their course.[84]

Events were also moving forward in North Africa. Darlan announced on December 1 the creation of a French Imperial Council under his direction. It was composed of the civil and military commanders of Algiers, Morocco and French West Africa. Darlan clearly intimated this body was to act as a de facto government to represent France and French interests with the Allies.[85] In a

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82. Kittredge Diary, November 29, 1942.

83. COMNAVEU message 291111Z November 1942.

84. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 109.

85. Kittredge memorandum, December 7, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 59.

dispatch to the War Department, General Eisenhower had referred to the "French Imperial Federation." A reply was drafted under the direction of Admiral Leahy and cautioned Eisenhower against using that term in any written agreements or communications with the French.[86] The United States was consistent in refusing to recognize the North African regime as anything more than provisional.

By the first week of December 1942, the political situation in North Africa had been fairly well resolved. Admiral Darlan was in power and was demonstrating his capacity to exercise authority effectively. The United States accepted North African political realities and acknowledged Darlan had an important continuing part to play, only so long as his efforts were directed towards resistance to the Axis. While recognizing the military contribution of Darlan and other French groups, the United States would have no part in attempting to pre-determine the ultimate political choice of the French people and, indeed, hinted opposition to any such attempts.[87] Darlan was safe, at least temporarily, so long as he played the United States' game. The problem confronting General de Gaulle was how to convince the United States to dispense with Darlan and then how to bring about a fusion of French forces on terms acceptable to the Fighting French. With the General's departure for Washington postponed at least to the

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86. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, p. 471.

87. Ibid., p. 473.

end of the month, the next step was to see what could be done about North Africa.

Meanwhile, on Friday, November 27, the French Fleet had been scuttled at Toulon. At least events had proven Darlan right in his previous assertions that the fleet would never fall into German hands. Aside from this sorry end to a fleet that once had been second only to the Royal Navy, the scuttling deprived the Allies of the possibility of acquiring needed warships and it deprived Darlan of a significant bargaining point, since it was he who nominally controlled it. The evidence is unclear as to what if any connection existed between the scuttling of the fleet and the reversal of the November 14 decision of the National Committee not to send a mission to Algiers. General de Gaulle hinted, however, that this event led many people to feel the continuation of Darlan in office was more of a liability than that of an asset.[88] This perception may have underlain the Fighting French change in attitude.

At any rate, the question of sending a mission to North Africa was discussed at dinner on November 30 by Admiral Stark and General de Gaulle. The French National Committee wanted to send General François d'Astier immediately to North Africa to discuss with French leaders and with the Allied Command staff the unification of French participation in the war against the Axis. In further talks the next day

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88. De Gaulle, Unity Documents, p. 71.

with the French staff, Kittredge referred to previous procedure whereby General de Gaulle sent a letter to the Prime Minister for submission to the United States.[89] General de Gaulle wrote to the Prime Minister on December 2 asking that General d'Astier head a mission of inquiry to North Africa. This proposal was transmitted to the President.[90] At dinner they also discussed the General's forthcoming January visit to the United States and possible methods to increase French support of Allied operations and the coordination of Fighting French action with that of the territories and other French forces.

The first real contact between the Fighting French and North African French was at Gibraltar on December 21, when General Catroux met General Francois Béthouart in an apparently inconclusive meeting. Catroux intimated that General de Gaulle should go at once to North Africa and, with Allied support and approval, replace Darlan as head of the North African administration and assume responsibility for it. Bethouart pointed out such a step would provoke widespread internal conflict in North Africa, including a virtual secession of French West Africa.[91] However, General d'Astier's visit to Algiers was the first time a Gaullist representative went to North Africa, even if it was in

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89. Kittredge memorandum, December 2, 1942, Document 38, COMNAVEU letter, December 10, 1942.

90. Kittredge memorandum, December 7, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 59.

91. Murphy to Leahy, December 17, 1942, Box 204, File: February 1943, COMNAVEU files.

the capacity of a personal representative of the General rather than as an exploratory mission of the French National Committee.

General Eisenhower had previously consented to a visit by d'Astier, whose task was to seek information and to pass it on to General de Gaulle. To accomplish this task it was essential that he have every possible contact.[92] He arrived in Algiers on December 20 and was asked to leave three days later.

While the d'Astier visit to North Africa had undoubted potential advantages for General de Gaulle, General Eisenhower approved it because he hoped it would make for greater tranquility in the area. He was worried about subversive activities, a fifth column and untrustworthy officials to the extent that they could not be dismissed from his military calculations.[93] At that time the Allies under General Eisenhower were engaged in the Tunisian campaign, which finally bogged down at the end of December and was suspended until spring.

General d'Astier, unfortunately, arrived in Algiers unannounced on December 19. There was some temporary difficulty in soothing his wounded feelings at the lack of a proper reception. There was also difficulty in assuring the local French that he did not mean to attempt a coup d'etat. D'Astier's apparent intention was to survey

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92. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 116.

93. Eisenhower to Marshall (Chief of Staff, U.S. Army), December 21, 1942, Box 204, File: February 1943, COMNAVEU files.

political sentiments and to observe local conditions. He also wanted to discuss the transfer of Fighting French troops from the Middle East and strategy for a future invasion of Europe. These latter questions appeared to General Giraud to be academic at the moment and not the real purpose of his visit. General Giraud advised General Eisenhower not to permit the visit to be prolonged.[94]

The Tunisian campaign was the over-riding concern of General Eisenhower, and for this reason he advised a military occupation of North Africa only as a final and inescapable measure. His primary concern at that moment was the security of his rear area. Even so, he was aware of the potential dangers that lurked at his rear.

General de Gaulle stated d'Astier received the impression of a bitter conflict straining beneath the surface. D'Astier had a stormy and rather unpleasant meeting with Darlan at which he told Darlan his presence was an obstacle to unity and he ought to step down.[95] It is not difficult to surmise the feeling engendered among the local French by d'Astier's visit to North Africa where political stability was somewhat precarious. General Eisenhower was apparently sufficiently worried about the adverse effect of d'Astier's visit that he asked d'Astier to leave on the official grounds that the basic purpose of his visit had been accomplished.

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94. Ibid.

95. De Gaulle, Unity, pp. 72-74.

When d'Astier departed Algiers after three days, he left written instructions for the Gaullists calling upon them to avoid internal friction until the enemy was removed from North Africa. To that extent, Gaullists were directed to suspend strictly personal attacks against their political opponents, while remaining firm on the doctrinal line.[96] The other tangible result was a demonstration of hostility towards General de Gaulle which did not fail to impress d'Astier and which was probably the reason for d'Astier's instructions in the first place.

In anticipation of General de Gaulle's visit to Washington, Admiral Stark planned to return home for consultations and presumably to brief the President in advance of the meeting. On the eve of his departure from London, Admiral Stark had a long and fruitful conversation with General de Gaulle.[97] The talk covered a wide range of topics related to the French in general, Fighting France, General de Gaulle personally and conceptions of how to unify French forces, as well as the proposed visit to Washington

Admiral Stark opened by asking if the General had any messages or a memorandum of questions to be transmitted to the President. The General preferred to place himself entirely at the disposal of the

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96. Eisenhower to Adjutant General, War Department (AGWAR), Algiers message 2831, December 23, 1942, Box 204, File: February 1943, COMNAVEU files.

97. Kittredge memorandum of conversation, December 17, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 65 ff.

President to furnish such information or to discuss such questions as the President might wish. He hinted that it would be preferable for his visit not to coincide with that of General Bethouart, a deputy of General Giraud, to avoid speculation that he was making a secret deal with Darlan under American auspices.

Many mistakes had been made by the Allies and others in dealing with France and with the Empire without recognizing the essential unity of France, General de Gaulle explained. France as a living entity was more than a total of the parts composing it. All Frenchmen, he said, whether in France or in the colonies look to some central authority. For example, when General Giraud arrived in North Africa, even with the sponsorship of the Allied military chiefs, he was nothing until he came under the auspices which seemed to personify France, even the France of Vichy. Only then was Giraud accepted as a French commander and obeyed by French officers and men. He understood how Americans with different traditions and outlook might err in dealing with the French. For this reason it was unsound to attempt to deal with the various local authorities in many parts of the world without realizing their powers and functions flowed from a central authority. Indeed, no French official, he said, could dissociate himself from symbolic national authority, whether it be the Marshal at Vichy, de Gaulle in London or now Darlan in Algiers.

General de Gaulle expressed full agreement with the immediate decisions and arrangements made by General Eisenhower for the sound

military reasons of establishing his expeditionary force with a minimum of local resistance and achieving a maximum of support for the Tunisian campaign then in progress. The danger the General saw in Darlan was the possibility of the conversion of temporary arrangements into permanent ones. Allied action had broken the link between North Africa and Vichy. The next task, he said, was to facilitate the natural and inevitable evolution from the illegitimate Vichy regime to the real image of France, a fighting France to which the majority of North Africans have looked for inspiration. Continued Allied support of Darlan would only frustrate this evolution. Were it not for American support, Darlan would quickly disappear.

General de Gaulle quite understood and agreed with the President's policy of refusing to approve any formal undertakings with Darlan or to recognize him as a national plenipotentiary. But the local American officials in North Africa evidenced a different attitude. He cited such examples as the failure to publicize the President's statement of November 17 in North Africa; access to Madrid of Darlan's emissaries to maintain contact with Vichy or possibly German officials; detention of political prisoners in North Africa; and permission to Darlan to seek support and adhesion of Vichy officials through the world.

Perhaps the most significant statement the General made was his willingness to permit Fighting French troops under French officers to fight under General Eisenhower's command or even under General

Giraud.[98] Were it not for Darlan's assumption of leadership in North Africa, General de Gaulle would already have sent Fighting French forces to serve under Generals Giraud, Juin or Barré in Tunisia.

The General declined to comment on Admiral Stark's passing remark that he must be anxious to return to a more active military role. Kittredge noted that he intimated his active role was to give expression to the opinions and resolves of all true patriots and to preserve the unity of the historical tradition of France.

In conclusion, the General noted that the tragedy of 1940 was that now what should be essentially French decisions had to be made by other people. President Roosevelt had a singular responsibility at that time and the destiny of France depended in large part upon the President's decisions and the use of American power. That was why the General wished to meet him. He hoped the President would be guided not only by American interests, but also by a sincere appreciation and understanding of the desires and interests of France. Wise solutions to current problems could be found only by giving expression to the spirit of an eternal France. He hoped he might aid the President to a better understanding of the complexities of the present situation.

Admiral Stark immediately wrote General Eisenhower to tell him that General de Gaulle for the first time went so far as to say he

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98. Stark to Eisenhower, December 16, 1942, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 2, p. 63.

understood Eisenhower's intentions in dealing with Darlan. The Admiral also told him that General de Gaulle was willing to put his troops under his or Giraud's command, but not that of Darlan.[99] A few days after this rather encouraging conversation, Admiral Stark departed London for Washington. He left affairs in the hands of his Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Alan G. Kirk and of his ubiquitous and exceptional staff man, Lieutenant-Commander Tracy B. Kittredge.

After his conference with Admiral Stark on December 17, General de Gaulle continued preparations for his visit to Washington. Tixier informed him on December 18 of a conversation with Welles in which it was stated the President would be pleased to receive the General on January 10 for a long conversation.[100] The General replied that he would be in Washington on January 9 and entirely at the President's disposal.[101] The General informed the American staff in London of the President's invitation.

As usual in these matters, London was not kept well informed. At mid-day on December 21, a dispatch was sent to Washington in which it was stated that General de Gaulle had been informed of the President's willingness to receive him and that the General had requested transportation to arrive in Washington not later than January 9. Was this

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99. Ibid.

100. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 116.

101. Ibid.

information correct?[102] Late in the afternoon of December 22, Admiral Leahy cabled Admiral Stark that it would be most convenient for General de Gaulle to arrive in Washington by January 7, since the President could see him on January 8 or 9.[103] Admiral Leahy had already clarified the term "invitation" by saying the President had not issued an invitation to General de Gaulle, but that he would receive the General if he came to Washington.

Tentative arrangements were made for General de Gaulle to fly to the United States in a special missions Army transport General Marshall had sent to England. The plane would depart England not later than December 27 and arrive at a Florida base via Accra about December 31. The plane would pick up General Catroux, then in Cairo, at its Accra stop. General de Gaulle was anxious to avoid any publicity or speculation on the purposes of his trip until after his meeting with the President. He was willing to follow the advice of the Americans as to his itinerary and contacts. Information was requested from Washington as to whether the travel arrangements were satisfactory. Suggestions were requested for the employment of General de Gaulle's time between arrival and January 7.[104] This message was dispatched

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102. COMNAVEU message 211226Z December 1942.

103. Leahy to Stark, Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) message 221708Z December 1942.

104. COMNAVEU message 241515Z December 1942.

almost simultaneously with the assassination of Admiral Darlan in Algiers.

The murder of Admiral Darlan was one of those fortuitous, unexpected acts which can suddenly transform a political situation. Each day that he remained in power, Darlan became more and more of a political liability for the United States. His death meant the end of an embarrassment, but it also dramatically re-opened the question of French unity and provided an opportunity for General de Gaulle. While the General condemned the criminal act, he also felt that Darlan's death eliminated obstacles to practical cooperation of all French forces in the common war effort. For this reason he was very anxious to discuss the unification of French forces with the President.[105]

Churchill had some second thoughts on the wisdom of General de Gaulle's trip after the Darlan assassination. He requested the General to delay his trip by 24 hours. This message reached General de Gaulle at the airport shortly before his scheduled departure on December 26. The General told Kittredge he immediately telephoned the Prime Minister who asked to see him prior to his departure. The meeting could not take place until the next day December 27, so departure would have to be delayed until December 28.[106] Churchill explained to Roosevelt the reason he asked General de Gaulle to delay his trip was that the

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105. COMNAVEU message 251700Z December 1942.

106. Kittredge memorandum, December 28, 1942, Box 204, File: CDR Clark, COMNAVEU files.

elimination of Darlan meant it was possible to build a nucleus of a new, unified French organization, and at least a start should be made before General de Gaulle went to Washington.[107]

The White House had also not been idle. The President had made his decision. Admiral Leahy cabled London that in view of the unsettled conditions in North Africa caused by the assassination of Admiral Darlan, the President desired to postpone the visit of General de Gaulle to Washington.[108] Kittredge verbally conveyed this message to members of the General's staff. Four hours later they reported to Kittredge that General de Gaulle had received the message and agreed with it.[109]

The next day, December 27, General de Gaulle requested Kittredge call on him. The General agreed that it was wise to postpone his trip for the time being. He wanted to await developments in North Africa and to begin discussions with General Giraud, who had just been selected to succeed Admiral Darlan. He wanted to wait for a reply to his Christmas message to General Giraud in which he proposed an immediate meeting. He also wanted time in which to make tentative arrangements with the North African French before his arrival in Washington. The General requested a written confirmation from Admiral Kirk of the

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107. Churchill, The Hinge of Fate, p. 645.

108. Leahy to Stark, Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) message 261625 December 1942.

109. Kittredge memorandum, December 28, 1942.

substance of Admiral Leahy's message about postponing the trip. He and General d'Astier were to lunch with Churchill and later might have a communication for Washington. Would Admiral Kirk call on him later in the afternoon?

One indirect result of the lunch with Churchill was a message that afternoon from the Prime Minister's secretariat agreeing that the Army transport plane could be released for return to the United States without General de Gaulle and his party.[110] The trip now was obviously postponed indefinitely.

The meeting of General de Gaulle with Admiral Kirk and Lieutenant-Commander Kittredge was not pleasant. The General's attitude was frigid and sullen, perhaps induced by strong talk from the Prime Minister as to the necessity for postponement. The General had no message for Admiral Kirk and he intimated he had expected proposals from Admiral Kirk, either as to another date for his trip to Washington or in regard to a meeting with General Giraud.

The General had been informed by his own delegation that the President could not see him between January 10 and 31. He complained of the postponement of his visits from November to December and then to January. He wanted to see the President immediately before a possible meeting with General Giraud. The General complained of a pro-Vichy attitude in the State Department, which was evidenced by the

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110. Ibid.

greements proposed by Robert Murphy and concluded between the Allied Commander-in-Chief and local Vichy appointed administrators. The General felt he must go to Washington immediately to insure the President's approval of the proper kind of agreement for the union of French forces in the war.

Since Admiral Kirk had called only to confirm Admiral Leahy's message about the President's desire to postpone the General's visit to Washington, he declined to comment on these inquiries. The meeting ended with a promise by General de Gaulle to reply in writing when he had received the letter with Admiral Leahy's message.

Later that evening Admiral Kirk received General de Gaulle's letter acknowledging receipt of Admiral Leahy's message. The General agreed under the circumstances to the postponement of the visit. Admiral Kirk cabled a report of the situation to date to Admirals Leahy and Stark in Washington.[111]

This phase was concluded by a stirring speech of General de Gaulle and a press conference by the President. The General called for union of all French forces in the war and expressed approval of the military leadership of General Giraud on December 28. Despite General de Gaulle's soft words, the rivalry between the French generals had begun. The next day the President said he hoped to see General de Gaulle "very soon." He also hoped a complete union could be achieved

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111. COMNAVEU message 281034Z December 1942.

between leaders of all French groups and territories wishing to participate in the common effort for victory over the Axis. Neither the President nor the General had changed his mind.

CHAPTER IV

GIRAUD - VICHY PERIOD

The main event in Allied French relations during the first six months of 1943 was the often halting, always slow progress Generals de Gaulle and Giraud made towards unification of the French forces. The ultimate objective of the Allies as well as the French was the eventual fusion of the Fighting French and North African French forces. However, differences over the terms or conditions for unification prevented its early achievement.

General de Gaulle, for various reasons, sought to dominate any unified French movement. The British, as sponsors of the Fighting French, tended to support General de Gaulle, but not to the detriment of their relations with the United States. The Americans put forward General Giraud as the leader of the North African French, and, hopefully, as the eventual leader of all French forces in the prosecution of the war.

Despite the great interest the Americans and the British had in seeing a unification of the two French camps, they were unable to effect it themselves. Only General de Gaulle and General Giraud could bring about a unification of the French forces. The failure of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill at Casablanca to

elicit an agreement between Generals de Gaulle and Giraud proved the point.

There was little American and British officials could do directly to bring about unification, other than by encouraging it and by placing no obstacles in its way. The primary function of Admiral Stark as the United States representative to the French National Committee during the period leading up to the formation of the French Committee of National Liberation in June of 1943, consisted of reporting and observing developments within the two French camps, more than conducting actual negotiations, although there were some exceptions.

Admiral Stark remained in Washington during the first few weeks following Admiral Darlan's assassination and the subsequent elevation of General Giraud to civil and military leadership in North Africa. During his absence from London, Commander Kittredge recorded and analyzed the status of negotiations between the two French groups and among the British, French and Americans. This invaluable staff work constituted much of the sum and substance of United States consultations with the Fighting French during this period.

Since the French held the initiative as far as unification of their forces was concerned, some emphasis must, therefore, be placed upon the vicissitudes of the political fortunes of Generals de Gaulle and Giraud. Intra-French negotiations and politics thus became important and must be described in sufficient detail so the specific

issues in which the United States became involved can be seen in the proper perspective. This process of recording and description was one in which Kittredge excelled. As a result, Admiral Stark was always kept well-informed and such information was in turn passed on to the Embassy and directly to the Navy Department in Washington.

At this time, the American authorities in London had no specific directives for discussions with the Fighting French of any plans for the unification of French forces. The absence of instructions was not due to neglect in Washington, but rather to the intention of Roosevelt and Churchill to deal with the problem themselves when they met at Casablanca in the latter part of January. This meeting was kept secret until its conclusion when its full effect on the French problem was felt in London on the return of General de Gaulle from his well-publicized meeting with the President, the Prime Minister and General Giraud.

The sudden and unexpected removal of Admiral Darlan on Christmas Eve 1942 created a political vacuum in North Africa. An immediate result was uncertainty as to the maintenance of political stability. Fortunately, the worst possibilities did not materialize. Generally things were quiet. In London, General de Gaulle realized his opportunity. Even before his trip to Washington was cancelled, he sent a telegram to General Giraud on Christmas Day, in which he deprecated the murder and said it was more necessary then ever to establish a national authority. He proposed to meet with General

Giraud in Algeria or in Tchad to study the means of unifying all French forces, both overseas and in the metropole.[1]

General de Gaulle knew both General Eisenhower and General Giraud were in Algiers. His impatience to receive a reply turned into suspicion that his message had not been delivered. He demanded to know on December 27 from Admiral Kirk, who had temporarily assumed Admiral Stark's duties, why this was so. While the General was impugning the U.S. Army, the message was delivered. This was another example of how small matters unduly rankled and irritated the General when he was under stress from other quarters, in this instance the cancellation of his visit to Washington and his unsuccessful attempts to replace Giraud.

In reporting the delivery of General de Gaulle's message, General Eisenhower noted that General Giraud seemed earnestly desirous of an understanding with the Fighting French, but felt a meeting at that time would be premature. Eisenhower predicted a reply along those lines, and he expected Giraud to make suggestions for future discussions.[2]

This message and all subsequent communications between Generals de Gaulle and Giraud were transmitted by means of the U.S.

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1. De Gaulle, Charles, Unity-Documents, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 117.

2. Eisenhower to Hartle (in London) message 271259Z December 1942, Box 204, File: February 1943, Commander U.S. Naval Forces in Europe (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU files), Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

Army communications facilities in London and in Algiers. The texts of the messages were delivered by letters signed by American staff officers. Both Admiral Stark in London and General Eisenhower in Algiers were fully aware of the substance of these messages.

Meanwhile, the Imperial Council met in Algiers on December 26 and unanimously elected General Giraud to succeed Admiral Darlan as civil and military head of North Africa. The Secretary of State endorsed Giraud in glowing terms and maintained that greater unity of all groups under his military leadership (emphasis added) would result.[3] The selection of Giraud was accomplished without consultations with the British or with the Combined Chiefs of Staff. It could only seem to General de Gaulle to be an indication of American opposition or hostility to him. To an extent he was right. The President looked on North Africa as subject to military occupation, which the French ought not to forget for a moment. If the local French authorities would not play ball, he felt they would have to be replaced.[4]

General de Gaulle still harbored some fragile hopes of a meeting with the President. Adrien Tixier, Fighting French delegate in Washington, called on Under Secretary of State Welles on December 28 to ask for information about the General's visit to Washington. Tixier

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3. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, (7 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), vol. 2, p. 493.

4. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, (6 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), vol. 2, p. 23.

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4. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, (6 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), vol. 2, p. 23.

felt that with the selection of Giraud, the General's visit should no longer be postponed. Indeed, he said, an agreement to unify the French forces could be obtained easily were it not for the influence of the former Vichy officials in North Africa, such as Generals Auguste Noguès and Pierre Boisson.[5] Nothing came of this last attempt to arrange a meeting between General de Gaulle and the President. General de Gaulle would now have to deal directly with General Giraud.

General Giraud's reply to General de Gaulle on December 29 expressed agreement for the necessity of a union of French forces, but because of an unfavorable atmosphere at that time, he felt a meeting such as that proposed by General de Gaulle would be premature. He suggested instead that their representatives meet to arrange for French cooperation in battle against the common enemy. General de Gaulle ignored the counter-proposal and strongly urged a personal meeting somewhere out of Algeria, for example, at Fort Lamy, Brazzaville or Beirut. He was convinced that only a strong central French provisional authority could ensure the direction of French efforts, the integral maintenance of French sovereignty and the rightful representation of French interests.[6]

General de Gaulle and René Pleven, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, assured Kittredge on January 2 of the intention of the National Committee to maintain absolute secrecy in regard to the exchange of

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5. Ibid., p. 555.

6. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, pp. 118, 120.

messages between Generals de Gaulle and Giraud. However, reports alluding to such messages appeared in the British and American press and in Axis broadcast sources. As a result, there had been much speculation about the status of negotiations and the possibility of French unification.[7]

Officials of the National Committee on January 2 referred to the Foreign Office and to the Prime Minister's office a suggestion that the French issue a statement to clarify their position. While the matter was under discussion in the office of the Prime Minister and in the Foreign Office, the statement, which had already been prepared, was released to the press that afternoon. It passed the censors because no question of military security was involved. The BBC broadcast it that same evening.

Aside from its premature release while it was still under discussion being a distinct discourtesy and breech of good faith, the statement only served to complicate matters. Internal confusion was growing in North Africa, it said, because of a lack of a solid base of support for the regime there and because of the exclusion of Fighting France, which had rallied so much of the Empire back into the war. The results of the confusion were a hampering of military operations, a virtual crippling of France by a lack of unity among the French

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7. Kittredge memorandum, February 10, 1942, in "Selected Documents from Correspondence of Admiral Harold R. Stark, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe," 4 vols., vol. 2, p. 2. (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU Documents)

forces and the "stupefaction" of the French people who were "dumbfounded" by the "strange fate" that had befallen North Africa. The way to end this confusion was to establish an enlarged provisional central authority, which would rule until the country made its wishes known. Referring to General de Gaulle's proposal to General Giraud for a meeting to discuss unity, it concluded that the course of the war and France's position brooked of no delay.[8]

The statement was released without the consent or knowledge of the British, to say nothing of Admiral Stark and his staff. So much is known of record. Soustelle, the Fighting French publicist, states that during the afternoon of January 2, in the course of discussions, a British official telephoned General de Gaulle and asked for a two day delay on its release. The General refused. Major Desmond Morton, private secretary to the Prime Minister, telephoned Pleven, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, to ask for a delay of only a few hours. Soustelle had by this time given the text to the American news agencies and it was too late to delay publication.[9]

From these facts it can be concluded that the French intended to release the statement that day. Given this intention, the reasons for discussion with the British can only be surmised. The French may

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8. Ibid., p. 120.

9. Soustelle, Jacques, Envers et contre tout, (2 vols., Paris: Robert Laffont, 1950), vol. 2, p. 108.

have hoped for British approval or at least no objections and when it was not forthcoming, they released it anyway. Certainly this was a high-handed act and a breach of good manners, if not good faith. The formal British protest it drew on January 4 was justified and appropriate. The Americans were disturbed by the unilateral announcement of secret and delicate negotiations still underway, which were being conducted through American channels. Aside from these real, but also transitory objections, there apparently was no lasting effect of the release of the statement, adverse or otherwise.

General Giraud had been absent from Algiers at the Tunisian front and he did not receive General de Gaulle's second message until January 3. He discussed it with members of the Allied staff and finally replied on January 6. General Giraud proposed a meeting of the two Generals in Algiers at the end of January, since his commitments in regard to organizing the French military effort in North and West Africa precluded an earlier meeting. In the meantime, he proposed again a meeting of military experts as soon as possible.[10] General de Gaulle was anxious enough for this reply to the extent that members of his staff inquired on January 5 if a reply had been received.[11]

General de Gaulle's third message to General Giraud was firm,

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10. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 121.

11. Kittredge memorandum, February 10, 1943.

if not strong, in its tone regretting the delay in their meeting. He said he was taking into consideration the proposal for establishing military contact and asked for information on the scope of the preliminary conversations, adding a barbed reminder that General d'Astier had been in Algiers on December 19. This last barb was a political non sequitur, since at the time of d'Astier's visit, Darlan was alive and it was Eisenhower, not Giraud, who asked him to leave. The last point the General made was a suggestion to send an officer with ciphers to obviate communicating by foreign agencies.[12]

British circles in London agreed generally with Giraud's view of the situation in North and West Africa. They saw little support for General de Gaulle and they felt that any precipitate attempt at unity would be unwise. They still envisaged the possibility of escape to North Africa of one or more eminent French leaders who would have the prestige and ability to be the provisional head of a central French national authority. If Generals Giraud and de Gaulle could accept some third party, then unification of all French forces would be possible. The most likely candidates were Albert Lebrun, President of the Republic: Jules Jeanneny, President of the Senate; and Édouard Herriot, President of the Chamber of Deputies.[13]

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12. De Gaulle, Unity Documents, p. 122.

13. Kirk memorandum, January 9, 1943, Box 204, File: CDR Clark, COMNAVEU files.

While Roosevelt, Churchill and their staffs assembled at Casablanca late in January, General de Gaulle reiterated to General Giraud his offer to meet him on French territory among Frenchmen, when and where he desired. Also, arrangements were made to send two Gaullist officers with ciphers to Algiers.[14] On January 16, General de Gaulle asked for written confirmation by the United States Commander-in-Chief of the plans for liaison and communication between the Fighting French and the North African French Staffs. The Army and Navy liaison officers in London, Colonel Sumner Waite and Lieutenant-Commander Tracy B. Kittredge, informed him that the United States authorities in London could not question the relations between French and American authorities in North Africa. But, they said, he could submit a formal question which would then be transmitted to the appropriate authorities. The General withdrew his request, saying that he would assume General Giraud's proposals had American approval.[15]

At this time, Churchill was urging General de Gaulle to come to Casablanca to meet General Giraud. General de Gaulle refused on January 17, on grounds that a sudden meeting at a high-powered Allied conference was not the best setting for a successful conclusion to French problems. It would be better for him to meet Giraud in simple

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14. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 127.

15. Kittredge memorandum, February 10, 1943.

and direct talks to come to a meaningful understanding.[16]

Churchill's application of considerable pressure on General de Gaulle may have been the precipitating factor of his bitter denunciation of the Americans to Charles Peake, British representative to the National Committee, on January 19. The General complained of American "plots" to hold up his messages to General Giraud until things were arranged to suit the Americans. As proof he cited the time lag in transmission and delivery of his messages. He claimed his first message to Giraud was delayed until the Americans had persuaded the North African authorities to make several arrests, including Gaullists (among them the brother of General d'Astier), in a suspected assassination plot against General Giraud and others. Peake remained unconvinced, but suggested the General discuss it with Foreign Secretary Eden. At first, the General said he was too busy, but finally agreed to see Eden the following day.[17]

The meeting with Eden the next day, January 20, is not mentioned in the memoires of either man. However, a second message from Churchill was delivered to the General probably at that time. The invitation to Casablanca was from both the President and the Prime Minister, and, Churchill pointed out, arrangements had to be made for

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16. DeGaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 126.

17. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 43. Also, Kittredge memorandum, February 10, 1943.

North Africa.[18] Aside from knowing the President had also invited him, General de Gaulle undoubtedly realized that if he were to have any influence upon arrangements in North Africa, he had better be there. Besides, he had already demonstrated his independence. He departed England on January 21.

While General de Gaulle was at Casablanca, no information was received in London about developments there. The General returned on January 26 and began an intensive series of conferences with his associates. In an apparent about face, he told Charles Peake that he was greatly impressed by the President's personality, statesmanship and sympathetic understanding of French problems. He was unable to reach agreement with General Giraud on anything but the need for immediate union of French forces and on the exchange of liaison missions.[19]

A communique issued in Algiers on January 27 implied that General Giraud had been recognized by the President and Prime Minister as the representative of French interests. This implication was strengthened by the President's agreement to a memorandum presented him by Giraud on the last day of the conference. This memorandum, hastily agreed to by the President, came to be known as the Anfa Agreement. It was essentially a commitment by the United States to

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18. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 127.

19. Kittredge memorandum, February 10, 1943.

arm Giraud's North African French Army, but it was also a great deal more. The President, without consulting the Prime Minister, agreed that he and the Prime Minister would give "every facility" to General Giraud to bring about a union of the French.[20] The implication was clear: General Giraud was favored over General de Gaulle. The Anfa Agreement was seen by the Fighting French as an expression of American hostility.

The French National Committee understandably objected to this implication. They broadcast a counter statement from Brazzaville in which the purely military role of General Giraud was emphasized and the claims of Fighting France to direct the united French war effort were reasserted. Kittredge felt this incident resulted in a delay by the National Committee to send a liaison mission to Algiers.[21]

Following a call on the Foreign Secretary on January 29, General Georges Catroux told Kittredge the National Committee had agreed in principle that he should head a liaison mission to North Africa, and also negotiate with General Giraud. Press reports received in London that evening indicated that new repressive measures had been taken against Allied supporters, including the Gaullist, Henri d'Astier. Civilian members of the National Committee were reported to be

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20. Department of State Bulletin, vol. 8, January 30, 1943, p. 94. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 45.

21. Kittredge Memorandum, February 10, 1943.

opposed to sending any kind of mission to North Africa until General Giraud gave suitable guarantees as to the liberalization of his post-Vichy regime and as to a suitable central political authority to direct a united French effort, which would be acceptable to General de Gaulle.[22]

In London discussions among the American and British officials on the one hand, and in the French National Committee, on the other hand, continued apace. On January 30, Peake reported the National Committee had decided to send a mission under General Catroux without limiting instructions to Algiers to unify the French war effort. Announcement was made public on January 31. General de Gaulle cabled General Giraud on February 2 that General Catroux would go to Algiers. To prevent premature or exaggerated public comment, he asked that no comments be made publicly except those mutually agreed upon.[23] General Giraud welcomed an immediate visit by General Catroux.

While General de Gaulle and the National Committee in London discussed the implications of the Casablanca meeting, General Giraud made some far reaching changes in the composition of the North African regime. On February 6 at the conclusion of the regular monthly meeting of the Imperial Council, General Giraud announced

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22. Ibid.

23. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 141.

its dissolution. The Imperial Council had been formed by Admiral Darlan at the beginning of December and its dissolution signified a decided break from Vichy-directed authority. A War Committee succeeded it. The purpose of the War Committee was to unify French action for the liberation of France. The composition of the War Committee included former members of the Imperial Council, but additional members were to be designated later by General Giraud, who had assumed complete military and civil power in North and West Africa. Other steps General Giraud took to liberalize the North African regime included release of political prisoners, abolition of fascist and Vichy organizations, and the creation of new administrative councils to advise and to assist the Governors of each colony and territory and to give effect to the decisions of the War Council. He also announced the abrogation of the Vichy anti-Jewish legislation.

In coordination with the British, General Giraud took steps to convince or possibly to compel Admiral René Godfroy to bring the French squadron at Alexandria into the war against the Axis in the Mediterranean. Reports were received that Admiral Robert Battet had arrived in Martinique to discuss with Admiral Georges Robert the re-entry into the war of the French West Indies. Unofficial information indicated the new War Committee might include such prominent Gaullists as General Georges Catroux, Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, General François d'Astier, General Paul-Louis Legentilhomme, as well as General de Gaulle. The possibility was

also bruited about that other new members might include prominent Gaullists and pro-Allied North Africans.[24]

It is difficult to say exactly what were the precipitating factors of these changes wrought by General Giraud, which only presaged his forthcoming major embrace of liberalism on March 14. There were many forces at work in North Africa at this time. Among them was an awakening from the awful humiliation and stupor of the Armistice followed by a Vichy regime. The American, Robert Murphy; the British Resident Minister, Harold Macmillan, and the energetic, brilliant and skillful Frenchman, Jean Monnet, were all in North Africa and exerted not a little influence on the course of events. There was general agreement as to the desirability and necessity for unity of the French forces. For various reasons, peculiar to each of the participating individuals, sides and factions, there was no agreement for several months on the terms and specifics of union. The situation was fluid and if agreement on unity could not be reached, perhaps cooperation could be derived from the recent agreement to send General Catroux to Algiers. Under these circumstances General Catroux departed England on February 6.

In early February 1943, Admiral Stark was still in Washington, because the President wanted him there when General de Gaulle arrived. It can be implied from this fact that the White House at this

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24. Kittredge memorandum, February 10, 1943.

late date had not definitively dismissed the possibility of such a visit, even though Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles had been non-committal in his interview with the Fighting French delegate, Adrien Tixier, on December 28.[25] However, Admiral Stark felt that since General de Gaulle's arrival had been delayed, the President would soon release him.[26] Such was the case. He returned to London by February 11.

The French National Committee received a notable addition in the person of René Massigli, who had left France only on January 27. Massigli was a diplomat of considerable experience. His last post had been that of Ambassador to Turkey. Refusing to accept the Armistice or to collaborate with Vichy, he resigned his position and returned to the French Riviera where he lived quietly until November 1942, when he went into hiding to avoid arrest by the Gestapo when the Germans occupied all of France. Massigli was a man of character and no mean ability. But most important, the many British and American diplomats who knew him, thought highly of him.[27] Almost immediately upon his arrival in London, he was made a member of the National Committee and on February 8 he replaced Pleven as Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. Events were to show this was a wise choice, because he not

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25. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 555.

26. Stark to Kirk, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, p. 1.

27. COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, p. 17.

only exerted a restraining or moderating influence on some of the more extreme elements in the National Committee, but also because he established a good working relationship with Admiral Stark and members of his staff. This working relationship or rapport was based on mutual confidence and respect.

Massigli conferred with Churchill on February 10 and was told the Prime Minister was "fed up" with General de Gaulle and would not see him personally in the future. Churchill stated His Majesty's Government was not disposed to tolerate future obstruction by General de Gaulle or by the National Committee of effective unification of French forces. Churchill told Massigli the British and Americans were agreed on the necessity of establishing immediately effective cooperation between the Fighting French and the North African French forces. After agreeing with Churchill's views, Massigli explained he had accepted his position as Commissioner for Foreign Affairs to achieve an effective union of French forces.[28]

Similar statements were made by Massigli to Admiral Stark on February 12. After explaining he had only recently come to England, Massigli emphasized that his only purpose was to achieve as quickly as possible an effective union of all French forces in the war against the Axis. He said he would not retain his position if opposition from Fighting French circles made impossible a union with General Giraud

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28. Ibid., p. 16.

and the North African French.[29]

Massigli made a good impression on Admiral Stark. The Admiral told Admiral King, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet, that Massigli's attitude could not have been better. In reference to Massigli's statement that if he could not succeed in uniting the different French elements, he would quit, Admiral Stark surmised that if such a situation did come to pass, other men around General de Gaulle would also quit and go to North Africa to get into the fighting. These hypothesized defections might occur under the leadership of General Catroux.[30]

Negotiations between Generals Catroux and Giraud took place between February 8 and 12 in Algiers. The immediate result was an agreement to exchange missions between London and Algiers.[31] General Catroux reported to General de Gaulle that Giraud's partisans in North Africa were bitter and disgruntled because they had expected a revolutionary and got a conciliator instead. Even so, it was necessary, he said, to work with Giraud, which Catroux felt he could do, given the time and patience, if he were at Giraud's side.[32]

The immediate upshot of General Catroux's mission and

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29. Ibid.

30. Stark to King, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, p. 26.

31. Tracy B. Kittredge, MSS Diary, February 14, 1943, Box 207, COMNAVEU files.

32. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 133.

subsequent report was approval by the French National Committee on February 19 of a mission to Algiers. Both sides hoped that eventual union would grow out of this first step at practical cooperation.

While Admiral Stark and his staff did not play a central role in these events, which were intra-French affairs, they and their British colleagues were close observers and were conversant with the details of events as they unfolded. In discharging his duty to keep his seniors in Washington informed, Admiral Stark sent them an analysis on February 20 of the current situation, which was prepared by his Liaison Officer, Commander Kittredge. This analysis was based on personal knowledge and observation and close daily contact with Fighting French officials.[33]

Despite the exchange of missions, the first practical step towards cooperation, Kittredge noted there still remained differences of ultimate political objectives. They involved not only differing policies, but also opposing views as to methods to be used and personnel to administer those policies. In other words, differences still remained between the French and London and in Algiers as to the resolution of the political problem separating them.

Even so, Kittredge expressed a certain amount of optimism in regard to the possibility of immediate agreement for: cooperation in

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33. Kittredge memorandum, Enclosure (a) to COMNAVEU (Stark) letter to Vice Chief of Naval Operations (Horne), serial 0319, February 20, 1943.

certain areas, such as the integration of French land, sea and air forces into a single, unified French command; joint arrangements with the British and Americans for re-equipment and training of French forces; joint maintenance of close contact with resistance forces in France with other French groups, such as Admiral Robert in Martinique and Admiral Godfroy in Alexandria; establishment of joint representation in Washington, London and Moscow; and the working out of joint economic and financial programs.

These steps were certainly the next logical steps to be taken to achieve union. They might have been possible under different circumstances. But they were clearly impossible so long as General de Gaulle and the French National Committee approached the problem of union from the standpoint of resolving political problems first before proceeding to questions of practical cooperation. Kittredge's optimism here was based on the American view of holding in abeyance fundamental political questions while proceeding to attack first the practical problem of waging the war. If Kittredge and Admiral Stark did attach any real hopes to these possibilities, they were to suffer disappointment until Generals de Gaulle and Giraud could resolve the political problem inherent in the union of their respective camps.

Kittredge was well aware that no complete or satisfactory union of the French in the war would be possible without the participation of General de Gaulle and the Fighting French. For this reason responsible British and American officials endeavored to use their

influence to bring about an agreement between Generals Giraud and Catroux which would be the basis of real unity for all French forces engaged in the war against the Axis. Kittredge apparently saw little chance of Generals de Gaulle and Giraud resolving their differences, because he indicated a better chance for a central provisional authority might be for one of the responsible leaders of the Third Republic to assume the direction of the political representation of France. He understood steps were underway which might produce such a solution within the next few months. Meanwhile, practical cooperation of the existing French leaders could at least lay the foundations for future united French action.

The conclusion that could be inferred from the analysis Kittredge made was that things were moving, even if slowly, to a more satisfactory basis. Indeed, Admiral Stark echoed this feeling to Admiral King.[34] The President's contacts with General de Gaulle helped, he said. Also, the arrival in London of Professor René Capitant, a leader of the North African Gaullists, gave General de Gaulle and the National Committee a less distorted and more realistic picture of North Africa from a first hand account. Admiral Stark was particularly pleased with the clarification by Capitant of Robert Murphy's role in North Africa. Capitant told the Fighting French that Murphy, rather than having used his influence to establish and to maintain the

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34. Stark to King, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, p. 26.

Vichy regime in North Africa, was chiefly responsible for influencing every constructive modification in conditions there, first with Darlan and then with Giraud. He also mentioned to Admiral King that Churchill at least for the moment was no longer dealing with General de Gaulle but with Massigli exclusively.[35]

Capitant and Admiral Stark had a long conversation on February 17 in which Capitant described in detail his interpretation and opinion of political events in North Africa.[36] The observations he made are significant and merit elaboration at some length not only because they were made by a keen observer, who was also a Gaullist leader, but also because they deeply impressed Admiral Stark and Commander Kittredge, as well as clearing up many doubts, fears and suspicions of General de Gaulle. Capitant's observations were lucid, thorough and reasonably objective. A summary is set forth below.

Capitant first explained how General Giraud came to send him to London. He had been one of the chief Gaullist leaders in North Africa, and editor of Combat, a clandestine anti-German and anti-Vichy newspaper. General Jean Marie Bergeret, General Giraud's subordinate in charge of civil affairs, ordered his arrest along with other Gaullists on December 29 for complicity in the so-called Darlan murder plot. He escaped. Later, when it became apparent that the charges were

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35. Ibid., p. 27.

36. COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, p. 18.

based on forgeries and other fabricated evidence, he was cleared. General Giraud sent for him and apologized. After the ensuing conversation, in which they discussed North African politics, General Giraud asked him to go to London to give General de Gaulle a first hand report.

Developments, according to Capitant, could be characterized as falling in three phases since the Allied landings in North Africa on November 8:

(a) The Darlan Period - November 8 - December 24.

(b) The Royalist Plot Period - December 25 - January 15.

(c) The Peyrouton Period - January 15 -

He anticipated two more periods:

(d) The Giraud - de Gaulle - Catroux Period.

(e) A union of the French war effort.

Many of the pro-Allied French in this period were Royalists, although the vast majority were Gaullists and Republicans. At first the French believed the Allies had deliberately planned to impose Darlan on North Africa, but now they generally realized that his presence was a surprise and that the Allies used him only as a temporary expedient. Even though Darlan kept all the Vichy officials in office, it soon became apparent that because of Murphy's influence, he agreed to a gradual dismantling of the Vichy regime by the abrogation of Vichy decrees, release of political prisoners and the gradual replacement of Vichy officials.

Darlan was unpopular with all groups in North Africa. His Vichy

past prevented the Gaullists and Republicans from supporting him, even when he tried to liberalize the North African regime. The fanatical Royalists who occupied most of the high positions in the Darlan High Commissariat became increasingly disaffected with Darlan's opportunism in cooperating with the Allies and with his refusal to agree to their programs. Darlan thus found himself without any effective following. This period ended abruptly with his assassination by the young Royalist, Fernand Bonnier de la Chapelle on Christmas Eve 1942.

Capitant was convinced that a small group of Royalists had long planned to seize power in North Africa. Adherents of the Comte de Paris, the Bourbon-Orleans pretender to the French throne, had been appointed to various positions of importance in North Africa, at the instigation and by the influence of Royalists at Vichy and in North Africa. The Royalists were able to enlist the assistance of the Gaullist resistance organizations in the plots and schemes anticipatory of the Allied invasion. These groups were instrumental in paralyzing much Vichy resistance to the landings.

The Royalists hoped to win over Admiral Darlan to the extent that he would transfer control over North Africa to a group of Royalists under the leadership of the Comte de Paris. When Darlan became increasingly subservient to the Allies, the Royalists began their conspiracy. They had two objectives. First, they wished to eliminate Darlan. Second, they sought to place the blame for his death on Gaullists and thereby to discredit the republican and liberal groups

in North Africa. To further their plot, they sought accomplices from among the Gaullists who had been pushed into the background by Vichy officials whom Darlan had kept in office. Although the Gaullists were nearly all in violent opposition to Darlan's control of North Africa, their suspicions were aroused and a period of intrigue with plots and counter-plots followed.

The Royalists found an irresponsible fanatical young Royalist, Bonnier de la Chapelle, who was willing to kill Darlan. He was persuaded that following the assassination, the Comte de Paris would seize power and would protect him. Thus, the assassination would be with impunity. The arrival in Algiers of General d'Astier, on a personal mission for General de Gaulle, provided an opportune moment for action. Rumors were spread that when Darlan disappeared, the Comte de Paris would take over. General d'Astier's brother, Henri, was a Royalist leader in North Africa and was in close touch with the Gaullists. This fact lent credence to the rumors. It was well known that the Comte de Paris arrived in Algiers on December 22.

The assassination was the only part of the plot that proceeded according to plan. The Royalists' attempt to have the Comte de Paris elected High Commissioner or even in an ad interim capacity failed. Capitant thought it was chiefly because of Murphy's influence. Murphy told Capitant in a brief conversation on December 26 that the Imperial Council could not possibly elect the Comte de Paris, because such a choice would be absurd and in complete contradiction to United States

and Allied policy. The assassin was summarily tried and executed. Capitant said he did not take his trial seriously because of his belief in powerful intervention to save him. Only when he actually faced the firing squad did the realization of his end come to him.

Giraud was then elected High Commissioner. A majority of his immediate subordinates were Royalists and believed his sympathies lay with them. They redoubled their efforts to discredit the Gaullists by fabricating evidence tending to show the complicity of the Gaullists in the assassination and their promise of immunity, rather than that of the Royalists, to Bonnier de la Chapelle. The upshot was the wave of arrests during the night of December 29-30, 1942.

Capitant believed it was the influence of the Allied Staff, and particularly that of Robert Murphy, that convinced General Giraud to have an impartial magistrate examine the evidence. The magistrate's report convinced Giraud the evidence was made up mostly of forgeries and fabrications. This report led to the release of those arrested with the exception of three men, one of whom was Henri d'Astier. The abortive attempt to blame unjustly the Gaullists for Darlan's assassination largely discredited the Royalists and caused General Giraud to lose confidence in them.

A new phase commenced with the appointment of Marcel Peyrouton as Governor-General of Algeria on January 16. Peyrouton had been the Vichy ambassador to Argentina, but he was also a capable administrator, experienced in North African affairs. Capitant saw this period as one

of diminishing tension and increasing conciliation among pro-Allied and republican leaders. The failure of the Royalist plot convinced Giraud that he had been deceived by his principal advisors. Therefore, he decided upon a program of complete reform of the North African administration and he sought a genuine understanding with General de Gaulle and the Fighting French.

These decisions were made only a few days before the Casablanca conference, Capitant noted. They were confirmed and extended by conversations with Allied leaders, as well as with Generals de Gaulle and Catroux. On his return to Algiers, General Giraud prepared a whole series of measures which were promulgated at the end of the Imperial Council meeting on February 6. These measures included dissolution of the Imperial Council, creation of the War Committee, abrogation of the anti-Jewish laws, release of political prisoners, official recognition of the Gaullist movement and official authorization for the publication of Combat, which had been published secretly up until February 1.

Capitant was convinced that the situation would rapidly improve with the active collaboration of General Giraud with the Gaullist and republican elements. Despite his Vichy past, Peyrouton was seriously intent upon executing Giraud's reforms and was honestly anti-Royalist.

Capitant hoped that with the exchange of missions between London and Algiers closer cooperation would result with the end effect being eventual union of the French forces in the common war effort. He

realized that cooperation would only be superficial until resolution of the underlying political problem. General de Gaulle refused to accept the Armistice of 1940 and, hence, rejected recognition of the legitimacy of any measures, domestic or foreign, taken by the Vichy government. He contended that France never ceased to fight, that it was bound by its pre-war alliance and that the French National Committee, as the representative of French participation in the war, was alone competent to lead and to direct French action in the war.

On the other hand, Capitant noted the North African regime recognized the validity of the Armistice and the ensuing French political developments. While General Giraud did not necessarily accept this view, he had not repudiated it. Capitant felt that Giraud must accept the essential position of Fighting France before real union could be achieved. Even so, the creation of procedures for joint action would bring the two groups closer together. Such cooperation could be expected to lead to personnel changes in North Africa which would make closer union inevitable.

Capitant believed firmly that cooperation between the two French groups must result in complete fusion. They would be prepared practically and psychologically by agreements being made through the Catroux mission to Algiers. He hoped that within the next few months republican institutions could be re-established in North Africa. He also hoped that union could be established under some responsible French political leader, such as Jules Jeanneny, President

of the French Senate, since he felt that neither General de Gaulle nor General Giraud was qualified or sufficiently experienced to lead and direct a united French effort in the war.

Eventual union, Capitant believed, could be achieved by close cooperation of the French in London and Paris, continued modifications of the North African regime, reorganization of the French army in North Africa with the assistance of General de Gaulle, and, finally, elaboration of a plan for a fusion of the National Committee in London and the War Committee in Algiers into a new provisional authority to administer the French Empire, to represent the interests of France in the war and to prepare for the liberation and reconstruction of France.

The effect of Professor Capitant's observations on Fighting French and American officials was two-fold. First, they helped to dispel some of the fog of suspicion and mistrust among the Fighting French. These dedicated men were absent from North Africa, which was the center of activity at this time, and they lacked a first hand view from a source they could trust. Admiral Stark noticed a decided lessening of critical hostility in Fighting French circles as a result of Capitant's visit. The second effect was a bolstering of the credibility of Admiral Stark and the American staff, because much of what Capitant told the Fighting French coincided closely with what Admiral Stark and other American representatives had already told them. After General de Gaulle had experienced a series of failures to achieve

various objectives, such as the visit to Washington and inclusion in the North African regime, which he generally attributed to hostile American influence, a fairly objective account and analysis of events was helpful in clearing the atmosphere.

This relatively optimistic view, shared by Admiral Stark, was echoed to the State Department by Freeman Matthews, the chargé d'affaires in London. He reported that the President's address of February 12 in which he stated that the Lavals and Quislings would not be maintained in power[37] and Professor Capitant's visit helped clear the air among the Fighting French in London. In particular, Capitant laid to rest a rumor started by some of the Fighting French that Robert Murphy was supporting the Comte de Paris. Matthews reported the optimists were saying General de Gaulle had been convinced that General Giraud agreed the French Army needed a thorough-going reorganization. Finally, Churchill's threat not to renew financial support of the Fighting French in the absence of substantial progress along the road to conciliation reduced significantly anti-Giraud propaganda and stories about "the Americans." Matthews concluded, "Massigli himself has confirmed my impression that the prospect of penury has chilled hearts (and tongues) of many of those at Fighting French headquarters."[38]

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37. Department of State Bulletin, vol. 8, February 12, 1943, p. 145.

38. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 57.

While Admiral Stark and Freeman Matthews may have been somewhat optimistic over the possibilities for greater French cooperation, if not actual union, a crisis was developing in Fighting French-British relations, which Soustelle described as one of the most serious he had seen in several years.[39]

On February 17, Genèral de Gaulle submitted a request to Charles Peake, the Foreign Office representative to the National Committee, to put an airplane at his disposal between March 1 and March 8 for a month-long inspection tour of the African and Middle East areas under Fighting French control. This proposed odyssey included visits to Cairo, Beirut, Tobruk, Tripoli, Tchad, Brazzaville, Madagascar and back to Cairo.[40]

The Prime Minister initially objected, presumably because he feared General de Gaulle would only cause trouble in those areas if he ever got there. The Foreign Office inquired whether Admiral Stark and General Eisenhower would agree to such a tour, and particularly to an Eisenhower-de Gaulle meeting.[41] Admiral Stark transmitted this inquiry to General Eisenhower. Meanwhile, General de Gaulle had made a similar inquiry in a message to General Eisenhower on

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39. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout, vol. 2, p. 197.

40. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 58.

41. Kittredge memorandum, March 5, 1943, Box 202, File: de Gaulle-Churchill Correspondence, COMNAVEU files.

February 15. On the same day that Admiral Stark sent his inquiry to General Eisenhower, General Eisenhower replied to General de Gaulle, saying he was looking forward to seeing General de Gaulle.[42]

General Eisenhower thought that personal contact by General de Gaulle with his troops at that time would be helpful and would contribute to the unification of the French war effort. General Giraud also favored a visit by General de Gaulle.[43] Admiral Stark informed Peake of General Eisenhower's lack of objections, but cautiously added that he understood the decision to provide facilities for such a tour rested with the British.[44]

Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden commented to Freeman Matthews on February 22 that he was faced with the choice of permitting General de Gaulle to make an extended tour and quite possibly stir up a great deal of trouble, or of vetoing the trip which might do more harm than good. Apparently he had no objection to General de Gaulle going to North Africa to review troops there and to confer with Generals Eisenhower and Giraud. But Churchill was opposed to the whole idea of any trip by General de Gaulle anywhere and sent instructions to Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign

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42. Eisenhower to de Gaulle, February 18, 1943, Box 204, File: February 1943, COMNAVEU files.

43. Eisenhower to Stark, February 21, 1943, Box 204, File: February 1943, COMNAVEU files.

44. Stark to Peake, February 22, 1943, letter serial 0055, Box 204, File: February 1943, COMNAVEU files.

Affairs, to tell General de Gaulle he could not leave. Because Cadogan was ill for a few days with influenza, the message was not delivered and the question remained open.[45]

The American staff was aware of British objections and delayed informing General de Gaulle of General Eisenhower's reply until the British indicated Churchill's objections might be withdrawn. Admiral Stark suggested General de Gaulle consult with Generals Eisenhower and Giraud to arrange the time and place of the meeting.[46]

Gaston Palewski, of General de Gaulle's personal staff, told Kittredge the General did not want to go to Algiers until the Catroux mission had finished its preliminary work in laying the foundation for ultimate cooperation with the Giraud forces.[47] Palewski also said that General de Gaulle planned to visit his troops in Tripoli and that he feared embarrassment if action were taken to place Fighting French troops under the command not only of General Eisenhower, but also of General Giraud.[48]

Churchill and Eden orally expressed unwillingness on February 25 to provide a plane for General de Gaulle.[49] The British refusal was

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45. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 64.

46. Stark to Peake, February 22, 1943, letter serial 0056, Box 204, File: February 1943, COMNAVEU files.

47. Kittredge memorandum, February 23, 1943, Box 204, File: February 1943, COMNAVEU files.

48. Kittredge Diary, February 23, 1943.

49. Kittredge memorandum, March 5, 1943.

made official in a letter on March 3, from Charles Peake to Rene Massigli as Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. This letter was in response to a specific request from General de Gaulle the previous day for a written reply to his initial request of February 17. General de Gaulle asked Peake for a written reply by 6 p.m. on March 3. Peake inquired if this were an ultimatum, to which the General replied, "Take it as you wish."[50]

His Majesty's Government, Peake wrote, felt the present moment was not well chosen for an extended visit of the kind contemplated. No such visit should be undertaken so long as French affairs were in their unsettled state and until General Catroux's mission to Algiers bore fruit. For similar reasons, the British deprecated a visit to the Levant states. Peake's letter was a skillfully worded document in which "No" was phrased to sound almost like "Yes." The gist of the letter was that the British felt a visit by General de Gaulle would be inopportune until more progress had been made towards an accommodation with General Giraud. The clear implication was that the British were using the trip to North Africa as insurance for the success of the Catroux mission to Algiers.[51]

Upon reading Peake's letter, Massigli asked whether he had to give it to General de Gaulle. Peake pointed out that since General de

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50. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout, vol. 2, p. 198.

51. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 139.

Gaulle had requested a written reply, the British could only comply. Massigli was so concerned with the possible effects of the letter on General de Gaulle that he called on Eden immediately and described them as "incalculable." Eden's reply was similar to that given by Peake. He said it was the decision of the British Government and he could only comply with General de Gaulle's request to put it in writing. Massigli then delivered the letter to General de Gaulle.[52]

Even before Peake wrote to Massigli, General de Gaulle had lowered his sights and told Admiral Stark and General Andrews of General Eisenhower's staff on March 3, that he emphatically wanted to see General Eisenhower without meeting at the same time either General Giraud or British Generals in North Africa. General de Gaulle apparently felt that as the "real representative leader of France" he should discuss a number of problems affecting his country with the American Commander-in-Chief in North Africa.[53]

Matthews cabled Secretary of State Hull from London that General de Gaulle proposed to suggest to General Eisenhower that General Giraud remove most of his senior officers. Many of his senior officers were certainly Vichy sympathizers and were by no means supporters of General de Gaulle. Matthews did not think

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52. Matthews to Hull, Telegram 1585, March 4, 1943, U.S. National Archives, Department of State, 851.01/1040.

53. Kittredge memorandum, March 5, 1943.

General de Gaulle was anxious to see General Giraud personally at that time and to that extent he agreed with the British that perhaps Catroux should prepare the ground first. Since the British refused transportation, he would like the Americans to provide it. Matthews noted that General de Gaulle was apparently indifferent to a possible widening of the breach between himself and General Giraud if he were to go to Algiers and see only General Eisenhower, thereby snubbing General Giraud.[54]

Charles Peake was informed of this request and the matter was neatly dropped into the lap of the British.[55]

Met with British refusal to provide transportation for any kind of trip, General de Gaulle asked Kittredge to call upon him in the evening of March 4 to receive a message he wished to send to General Eisenhower. After some discussion, the substance of which Kittredge apparently did not record, General de Gaulle decided to withhold the message.[56] Embassy and Foreign Office officials were informed and Peake wrote to Admiral Stark setting forth the British position. To preclude the possibility of American transportation to North Africa for General de Gaulle, Eden asked Matthews not to provide it without agreement with the British. Eden was following Churchill's express

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54. Matthews to Hull, Telegram 1557, March 3, 1943, U.S. National Archives, Department of State, 851.01/1039.

55. Kittredge memorandum, March 5, 1943.

56. Kittredge Diary, March 4, 1943.

wish that General de Gaulle be given no facilities to go to North Africa, "Whatever the reasons he might allege for wanting to see General Eisenhower."[57]

The British refusal to provide air transport for General de Gaulle precipitated a minor crisis in two senses. First, it made the British say for the record what everyone knew anyway. The British were no longer able to stall or to equivocate on their refusal to provide transportation. Second, General de Gaulle was furious and retired to the country for the weekend on Friday, March 5, without even going to his headquarters that day.

The danger presented by General de Gaulle's frustration and anger was that he might act precipitately, as he did with his "treachery letter" to Admiral Stark in November 1942, and thereby make the situation worse than it was already. On Saturday, March 6, while still in the country, the General threatened to take "drastic action," although no one seemed to know exactly what kind of action he had in mind. In reporting these events to Hull, Matthews referred to them as "one of the usual Carlton Garden crises," indicating that General de Gaulle's reaction presented more of an annoyance than a threat.[58]

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57. Matthews to Hull, Telegram 1586, March 4, 1943, U.S. National Archives, Department of State 851.01/1041. Also, Kittredge memorandum, March 5, 1943.

58. Matthews to Hull, Telegram 1800, March 13, 1943, U.S. National Archives, Department of State, 851.01/1054.

There was more to the crisis than simply General de Gaulle's pique at being thwarted. One reason he wanted to see General Eisenhower was to obtain a commitment that the Americans would not furnish arms to any underground movement in metropolitan France that might be organized by General Giraud.[59] The underground movement or "Secret Army" was of particular importance to General de Gaulle, not so much for what it could do at that particular moment, but for the promise of its future ability to lead a resistance against the Germans and for what it symbolized.

One of General de Gaulle's claims to legitimacy in representing "the real France" was that most of the people in France supported him. This claim was backed up by evidence that the "Secret Army" was essentially Gaullist. Thus any potential rival underground movement that might be established by General Giraud would tend to pose an extremely serious threat to Gaullist claims. General de Gaulle wanted no competition in France. The fact that the British successfully prevented him from visiting not only his own troops in the field and Fighting French territories, but also from even having the opportunity to talk to General Eisenhower to forestall a rival movement in metropolitan France goes far to explain his outrage. Given the rather volatile temperament the General had displayed on more than one occasion in the past, the wonder is that he only stormed off into the

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59. Matthews to Hull, March 4, 1943, Telegram 1585.

English countryside for a weekend.

Massigli was properly concerned about the possible dangerous consequences of the breach with the British over the issue of General de Gaulle's trip to Africa. Since General de Gaulle was absent, he presided over a meeting of the National Committee on Monday, March 8. In an effort to reach a compromise acceptable both to General de Gaulle and to the Prime Minister, Massigli persuaded the National Committee to request the British to provide an aircraft for General de Gaulle on a written pledge that he would visit only the Fighting French headquarters in Tripoli and on condition that they agree to resign in a body if the General violated the pledge.[60]

That same day the compromise was brought informally to the attention of the Prime Minister and to the Foreign Office. Churchill refused to allow any concession which would permit General de Gaulle to go to Africa. Upon learning of the compromise, General de Gaulle also rejected it. He indignantly refused to give any pledge to the effect that if he went to Africa he would not visit any places where he felt his duty called him.[61]

General de Gaulle returned to London on Tuesday, March 9, as Kittredge noted, in a much more philosophical frame of mind.[62] He

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60. Matthews to Hull, March 13, 1943, Telegram 1800.

61. Kittredge memorandum, March 12, 1943, Box 202, File: de Gaulle-Churchill Correspondence, COMNAVEU files.

62. Ibid.

presided at a meeting of the National Committee the following day at which time he outlined his personal position and his reasons for insisting upon an immediate visit to Africa, even though it would involve a final break with the British. He also mentioned the possibility of resigning from the movement and disbanding the National Committee.[63]

André Philip demurred, declaring that the great "Gaullist majority" in France would not understand or forgive a breach with England on the part of the Fighting French or a failure to reach agreement with General Giraud. The ensuing discussion apparently changed General de Gaulle's mind, because at the end of the meeting he made conciliatory remarks and agreed with Philip that nothing should be done by Fighting France that would not be acceptable to French public opinion and to the French resistance groups. The General also agreed to postpone indefinitely his plans for a visit to Africa.[64]

Kittredge reported another controversy between General de Gaulle and the British. It arose on March 11 when the General in mid-afternoon sent to the Foreign Office the text of a broadcast he wished to make at 9:15 that evening. The Prime Minister had ruled that he must personally approve the text of any broadcast General de Gaulle might wish to make. Since Churchill was out of town, it was impossible

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63. Matthews to Hull, March 13, 1943, Telegram 1800.

64. Ibid. Also Kittredge Diary, March 10, 1943.

to obtain his approval. The British considered the text to be "relatively moderate" and, indeed, it contained an appeal to Giraud and to Frenchmen throughout the world to unify their action in the war, as expected by 90 percent of the population of France. The broadcast also insisted that such a union could only be achieved by adopting the principles of Fighting France which had the enthusiastic support and approval of metropolitan French public opinion. The text was sent at once to Churchill who approved it. The delay in the broadcast was only four hours.[65]

While General de Gaulle was deeply involved with the British over their refusal to provide him air transportation, the National Committee was jockeying for an advantageous position in regard to General Giraud. On February 23, the National Committee had addressed a memorandum to General Giraud on the occasion of the sending of the Gaullist mission to Algiers. This memorandum was not made public until March 13, at which time Admiral Stark received a copy. Indeed, the only reason it was made public at that time was to upstage an important policy statement General Giraud was scheduled to make on March 14.

The memorandum was a statement of the conditions under which the French war effort could be unified. The terms were essentially Gaullist. It demanded a repudiation of the 1940 Armistice on grounds

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65. Matthews to Hull, March 13, 1943, Telegram 1800.

that it was unrepresentative of the nation. As a corollary, it called for the dismissal from office of men in key positions who were personally responsible for the capitulation and subsequent collaboration with the enemy. These terms were the distinguishing features of Fighting France and served to separate that movement from any others that were essentially anti-German and sought the liberation of France. Other conditions called for the restoration of fundamental liberties and republican institutions as they existed on June 16, 1940, under the laws of the Third Republic.[66]

Since the memorandum was fairly long, summaries were circulated. Matthews noticed the summary the Foreign Office cabled to the British Embassy in Washington omitted a number of political implications. (Similar omissions occur in the edited version General de Gaulle published in his Mémoires.) For example, the memorandum asserted that the "natural procedure for unification" insofar as French North and West Africa were concerned was their incorporation into Fighting France and a corresponding enlargement of the National Committee. The National Committee felt that this was "the most efficacious and most justifiable solution."[67] Although somewhat modest, the conditions put forth by the National Committee were consistent with their position that they were the representatives of the

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66. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 136.

67. Matthews to Hull, March 14, 1943, Telegram 1805, U.S. National Archives, Department of State, 851.01/1055.

real France and therefore "real" Frenchmen ought to join Fighting France. This position was not susceptible either to compromise or to accommodation with sincerely anti-German Frenchmen who had nevertheless felt it their duty to obey the commands of Vichy as successor to the last regularly constituted government of the Third Republic. As could be expected, this attitude proved to be a bone of contention and delayed unification of the French war effort for some time.

A fillip, interesting because it revealed an attitude of the National Committee, was another French comment Matthews noted. The Allies were given credit for having facilitated the re-entry into the war of certain French forces in North Africa. It was implied that such re-entry broke the unity of the French forces. The result in North Africa was confusion, anxiety, "unquestionable discontent" in the French nation and "some degree of uncertainty" in domestic public opinion in the democracies.[68]

The firmness exhibited by General de Gaulle and the National Committee depressed Massigli. Contrary to his advice, General de Gaulle sent instructions to General Catroux to the effect that any union of Fighting France and the North African regime would be contingent on General Giraud's public proclamation of adherence to General de Gaulle and to Fighting France. By way of concession General de Gaulle was willing to modify the composition of the National Committee. In

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68. Ibid.

view of reports of his growing strength in metropolitan France as supplied by people who had recently left France, General de Gaulle felt his prestige required a form of public submission by General Giraud to his authority.[69]

Kittredge agreed with Matthews that the visits of emmissaries from France were behind the notable stiffening of the Fighting French attitude towards agreement with General Giraud. During the first week in March 1943, the National Committee reiterated on several occasions that "Gaullism" was identified in France with resistance to the Germans and that General de Gaulle alone was qualified to direct and to command French action in the war against the Axis.[70]

As to negotiations with General Giraud, Matthews reported they were at a standstill until General Catroux returned to Algiers. Even if the clear statements of principle in the National Committee's memorandum of February 23 were not enough to stall negotiations, relatively minor annoyances did not help matters. For example, General Giraud objected to the inclusion in the de Gaulle mission to Algiers of men such as Pompei and Pélabon because they were members of Colonel Passy's secret organization. Passy was involved in clandestine cloak and dagger operations in France which he directed from Duke Street in London. Despite any contributions this organization

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69. Matthews to Hull, Telegram 1557, March 3, 1943.

70. Kittredge memorandum, March 5, 1943.

may have made to the Allied war effort, it had also earned a certain degree of notoriety for its strong arm methods. In short, many considered it a Gaullist gestapo. Giraud's objections caused resentment at Carlton Gardens, where the Gaullists suspected Giraud of harboring designs to establish his own, rival "Secret Army" in France.[71] This may very well have been behind General de Gaulle's earnest desire to talk to General Eisenhower in an attempt to obtain a commitment that the Americans would not equip a "Secret Army" for General Giraud.

All was not well within the Gaullist camp. In addition to Massigli's depression at being unable to exert influence over General de Gaulle, General Catroux had warned General de Gaulle that unless an early agreement was reached with General Giraud, he would be compelled to "re-examine his personal position."[72] This comment supported Admiral Stark's hunch that Massigli and Catroux might quit if Generals de Gaulle and Giraud failed to come to agreement.[73]

Despite these fissures in the Gaullist camp, General de Gaulle was growing confident that the "ripe fruit of North Africa" would soon drop into his hands. Apparently General de Gaulle felt that Giraud's steps toward "liberalization" of his regime would somehow produce in North Africa an irresistible demand for General de Gaulle, and on his

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71. Matthews to Hull, Telegram 1800, March 13, 1943.

72. Ibid.

73. Stark to King, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, p. 26.

own terms.[74]

His own terms were set forth in his instructions to General Catroux.[75] He sincerely wished to establish unity as soon as possible. Unity was necessary to defeat the enemy and to protect the position and interests of France vis a vis the Allies. Unity could only be achieved under conditions which would preserve the conception of Fighting France held by the French population. For this reason, Darlan and other Vichy sympathizers were unacceptable in unifying the French war Effort. Unity required a basis and that basis was the one expounded in the memorandum of the French National Committee. Until unity could be established, Fighting France would remain organized as it was. He believed more than ever that he had been right since the first day. With such firm conviction in his cause it is quite understandable how he was convinced of the ultimate triumph of Fighting France, even in the face of great obstacles.

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74. Matthews to Hull, Telegram 1800, March 13, 1943.

75. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 140.

CHAPTER V

GIRAUD - REPUBLICAN PERIOD

In the spring of 1943, unity of the French forces for the prosecution of the war was as important to the Allies as ever, particularly since the end of the Tunisian campaign was near. With the expulsion of the Axis from North Africa, the next major step was to be an invasion of Sicily and then Europe itself. All possible assistance would be required to perform such prodigous military feats. The French Army had already distinguished itself in North Africa. A unification of all French forces was necessary for the most effective use of those forces.

Despite the continuing necessity for unification, the American and British officials were in no better position to effect unification than they were before. Only an agreement between Generals de Gaulle and Giraud could bring about the desired end. Even so, Robert Murphy and Harold Macmillan in Algiers and Admiral Stark and the Foreign Office in London offerred their good offices and exercized their persuasive capabilities to facilitate such a unification. But misunderstandings, disappointments and sheer human orneriness still slowed progress towards unification.

Much of the influence of the Allies was indirect and advisory in

nature. While Murphy reported to Washington from Algiers, Admiral Stark and his staff assistant, Commander Kittredge, observed and reported from London. It would be misleading to attempt to chronicle events in the one place without regard to the other. Thus, the focus of the narrative must move at times from London to Algiers.

In mid-March 1943 the impression of Admiral Stark and his staff in London was that Giraud was marking time in North Africa by making under Allied influence some liberal changes in his administration, but that he was reluctant to commit himself in advance to the re-establishment of republican institutions as they had existed under the Third Republic. Since the French National Committee's memorandum of February 23 held the re-establishment of such institutions to be an indispensable condition to any general agreement, Commander Kittredge of Admiral Stark's staff saw relations between the two groups as deadlocked.[1]

The truth of the matter was that General Giraud was essentially apolitical in outlook rather than that he harbored any fundamental opposition to the Republic. He was a soldier first and he readily admitted he always had a horror of politics.[2] His primary interest

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1. Kittredge memorandum, March 12, 1943, Box 204, File: March 1943, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, files (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU files), Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

2. Giraud, Henri, Un seul but, la victoire, (Paris: Rene Juillard, 1949), p. 121.

was in prosecuting the war. He had one passion, France, and but one goal, victory.

However, the exigencies of high politics would not be satisfied with only such a laudable objective. It was necessary for the North African regime under Giraud to embrace liberal and republican principles to justify their war effort. The President sought to make Giraud the leader of the French war effort, which would have to have a political cause in addition to a very real military objective.

At Casablanca, President Roosevelt had agreed to equip General Giraud's forces. If General Giraud were to embrace liberal and republican principles, equipping his forces would be more easily accomplished from the political standpoint and General de Gaulle might possibly be upstaged. The President realized Giraud lacked administrative capacity. At the suggestion of his personal assistant, Harry Hopkins, he authorized the sending of Jean Monnet to Algiers to work with Giraud on handling the substantial lend-lease arms aid.[3]

While in Algiers, Monnet became a close advisor of Giraud and convinced him of the necessity of publicly embracing liberalism and republicanism. Giraud frankly admitted the importance of Monnet's advice.[4] The result of Monnet's advice was Giraud's epochal speech of March 14, 1943. This advice was probably based on the proposition

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3. Sherwood, Robert E., Roosevelt and Hopkins, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 679.

4. Giraud, Un seul but, la victoire, Chapter 6.

that arms aid would be facilitated by a public embrace of the appropriate principles, among other things. Giraud's good intentions cannot be discounted either.

The speech General Giraud made to the Alsace-Lorraine Society of Algiers was a milestone in his administration in North Africa.[5] He roundly condemned Vichy by pointing out that not one voice in France had been raised in opposition to the incorporation of Alsace-Lorraine into the Reich. Since June 1940, France had been gagged and silent. He noted that an heroic France had risen against the indignity of serfdom. He repudiated the armistice because the people of France had not accepted it. The French people would remain true to themselves. They had never given up. The French Army of victory would join with the Allies to liberate the mother country.

Giraud repudiated the legality of any acts taken since the armistice on grounds that the German occupation prohibited the French people from voicing their opinion. The expression of French sovereignty proceeded from the freely expressed will of the French people. Thus, a provisional government could only be established when France was liberated. In regard to measures that had already been taken, Giraud announced that municipal assemblies and the General Councils would resume their traditional roles; that Nazi-inspired laws of racial

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5. Documents on American Foreign Relations, (13 vols., Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1944), vol. 5, p. 560.

discrimination were abrogated; and that the French tradition of human liberty and equality before the law had been restored.

Giraud wished for a union of all Frenchmen which would be wholehearted and effective. Such a union would embrace not only Frenchmen in France, but Frenchmen outside of France. He placed strong emphasis on union by saying it was indispensable and a question of life or death for his country. Disunity was the evidence of defeat, unity the mark of victory. He was ready to cooperate with all those who accepted the basic and traditional principles of which he had spoken.

Reaction to General Giraud's speech was prompt and favorable. From Algiers, Robert Murphy told the President the speech set forth with "crystal clarity" Giraud's purpose of identifying himself with those traditional principles which had governed France and which were at the core of current American political philosophy. Murphy significantly noted the status of Giraud's organization was that of an administrative body concerned only with the prosecution of the war. The liberty of action of the French people was preserved. He urged the President to applaud publicly "this spontaneous French gesture which outlines a charter of French freedom."[6]

In Washington, Secretary of State Hull commended Giraud's speech. He said Giraud had confirmed the American hopes that his

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6. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, (6 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), vol. 2, p. 71.

selection as Commander-in-Chief of French forces in North Africa would make possible a greater unification of all groups behind his military leadership (emphasis added.) Hull noted that Giraud had made it possible for all elements desiring the defeat of the Axis and the liberation of France to unite. Although he did not say under what conditions union would come to pass, he clearly implied there were no major obstacles to unification of the French war effort.[7]

Speaking in the House of Commons, Churchill warmly welcomed Giraud's speech. He noted that the liberation of France through victory required the unity of Frenchmen everywhere, and, above all, that all Frenchmen outside the power of the Nazis should act loyally against the common enemy without a day's needless delay. Referring to Giraud's speech and the memorandum of the National Committee, Churchill saw no question of principle dividing those two bodies of Frenchmen.[8] Hull delivered an amen to Churchill's statement by saying the United States was "in the heartiest accord" with it and found satisfaction in Churchill strongly commending this further step towards French unity.[9]

General de Gaulle simply noted in his Memoires that General Giraud "read out" a speech condemning Vichy and paying homage to the Republic.[10]

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7. Documents on American Foreign Relations, vol. 5, p. 565.

8. Ibid., p. 565.

9. Department of State Bulletin, vol. 8, March 20, 1943, p. 229.

10. De Gaulle, Charles, Unity 1942-1944, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 104.

In an official communique from the French National Committee, General de Gaulle noted with satisfaction that General Giraud's declarations showed "great progress" towards the doctrine of Fighting France, which had been defined in June, 1940, upheld ever since and restated in the memorandum of February 23.[11] In this respect he was undoubtedly correct because the issue of the legitimacy of Vichy's authority had been a major bone of contention between the Fighting French and North African French since the Allied landings the previous November. Repudiation of this legitimacy by General Giraud was a definite move towards the position of the Fighting French. Although Soustelle thought Giraud's speech was mediocre because it only partially answered the questions posed in the February 23 memorandum, he enthusiastically endorsed the call for a union of the French war effort.[12]

An unofficial observer, George Bernard Shaw, described the Giraud speech most aptly as a "staggering performance." He was convinced Giraud was not the author, because if he were he would have made his mark as an orator long before. Shaw said, "No soldier, short of another Caesar, Cromwell or Wellington could have achieved such a feat."[13] The identity of the ghost writer is obscure, but the influence

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11. De Gaulle, Charles, Unity-Documents, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 143.

12. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout, (2 vols., Paris: Robert Laffont, 1950), vol. 2, p. 207.

13. Shaw, George Bernard, New Leader, April 6, 1943, quoted in Arthur Layton Funk, Charles de Gaulle: The Crucial Years 1943-1944, (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1951), p. 108.

of Monnet cannot be denied. Kittredge believed he was the author. In a second cable to the President on March 14, Murphy continued in the euphoric vein of the previous cable and concluded with the observation that Jean Monnet had done a "grand job."[14]

While comments were still coming forth from Washington and London on his speech, General Giraud through General Catroux invited General de Gaulle on March 15 to visit Algiers. The next day the National Committee accepted General Giraud's invitation, which they viewed as a means of speeding up the unification of the French war effort. Two days later, on March 18, General Catroux informed General Giraud that General de Gaulle had accepted the invitation.[15] Details of the visit still had to be worked out. This was the job of General Catroux.

The members of the de Gaulle mission in Algiers were open and candid to Robert Murphy about their position.[16] It was abundantly clear to them that the purpose of General de Gaulle's visit was to establish his leadership of the united French movement. The Gaullists reasoned to Murphy that since General Giraud had set forth the principles on which unity could be based and had no desire to retain political leadership, there was no reason for General de Gaulle not to assume the leadership. General Giraud would retain the position of military

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14. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 74.

15. Tracy B. Kittredge, MSS Diary, March 18, 1943, Box 207, COMNAVEU files.

16. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 74.

commander of French forces.

Murphy noted significantly that the basis of General de Gaulle's leadership would be the establishment of a provisional government of France, even though General Giraud had publicly committed himself to the forbearance of creating such a body until the liberation of France and the French people were able to make their own, free choice. The Gaullists were either overlooking or deliberately discounting this essential condition from General Giraud's standpoint. Rather, they saw in General Giraud's embrace of liberalism and republicanism an acceptance of Gaullist principles to the extent that real differences no longer existed, but only those of personalities.

Murphy recognized that the Gaullist proposals would conflict with the basic principles Giraud recognized; that no government provisional or otherwise, would be established until France was liberated and the people had a chance to exercise their right to choose their own government. It was clear that General de Gaulle would spare no effort to create a provisional government in his talks with General Giraud. Murphy assumed that Washington would want him to support unification of French forces on the only basis that could insure lasting unity and preservation of the principles of the Atlantic Charter. That basis was that until the liberation French interests could only be grouped under temporary trusteeships exercising jurisdiction in the name of the French people.[17]

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17. Ibid.

Murphy's impression found "considerable corroboration" by Freeman Matthews, the American Charge d'affaires in London. Conversations with members of the National Committee revealed that they thought Giraud had been "worn down" to the point where he would be willing to turn the political administration in Algiers over to General Catroux, if not to General de Gaulle. The Fighting French in the relative isolation of London had convinced themselves that suffering France demanded the "leadership of de Gaulle the man, not merely de Gaulle the symbol." Their public and private speech showed an awareness that American policy was the chief obstacle to their de facto recognition as the government of France. However, thanks to National Commissioners André Philip and René Massigli, they also realized that the French people would never understand a break with the American and British Governments. Since General de Gaulle was apparently impressed with this advice, Matthews noted, it would be well for Washington to remember it.[18]

Giraud's invitation to General de Gaulle and the almost truculent or at least supremely confident attitude of the National Committee took place while Foreign Secretary Eden was in Washington for several days late in March 1943, where he discussed the whole gamut of world political affairs with the President and the Secretary of State. In regard to French affairs, the American and British governments were working at somewhat cross purposes. While at Casablanca in January,

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18. Ibid.

the President had made a commitment to General Giraud to equip his army. This was a unilateral American commitment, made without consultation with the Combined Chiefs of Staff. It could only be expected that such a commitment would cause difficulty between Washington and London, which had not really come to a common policy in French affairs. The situation was further complicated by an almost unreasonable hostility in the State Department toward the Fighting French, and General de Gaulle in particular.

Undoubtedly as a result of the President's commitment to arm General Giraud, the Gaullists mounted rather critical propaganda attacks against the United States. Hull complained to Eden not so much of these propaganda attacks, but of a lack of any British statement expressing concurrence with the Americans.[19] Neither Eden nor Lord Halifax, British Ambassador in Washington, who was also present, was impressed with the advisability of such a statement, particularly since there was a sharp division in the French camp. Even though these attacks only exacerbated Hull's hostility towards General de Gaulle, which was not ameliorated by Eden's position, it could only be expected that the Gaullists would take umbrage with the American policy.

Eden attempted to approach the French problem logically. First, he asked if the United States would object to the setting up of some kind

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19. Ibid., p. 77 f.

of central authority among the French to deal with French questions. Hull had no objection. Eden then asked if the French got together and agreed on some kind of unified authority, would such an arrangement be satisfactory to the United States? Hull replied, in essence, that such an arrangement would be satisfactory. Both Hull and Eden agreed that any such French authority should not have governmental functions and powers, even of a provisional nature, but should consist merely of "place holders" dealing temporarily with French questions.

From this conversation it would seem that the Americans and British saw eye to eye on French affairs. Actually, any identity of British and American policy was superficial. The difference between the American and British positions was rooted in differing conceptions of an international order. One astute student of the period has pointed out that British policy required a strong, well-armed and independent France, which in harmony with Britain would act as a counter-weight to any possible Russian hegemony on the continent.[20] American policy, on the other hand, conceived of a collective security arrangement by which the major powers would deal with potential trouble spots as they arose. In such a situation it was relatively unimportant whether or not France was one of the great powers. Besides, an enlarged National Committee as envisaged by General de Gaulle would tend to promote the Anglo-Gaullist scheme which the Americans were disposed

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20. Funk, Charles de Gaulle, p. 112.

to thwart. These reasons give a compelling rationale for American support for Giraud, in addition to the genuine dislike and suspicion of General de Gaulle that was prevalent in Washington.

The President was aware that Eden and Hull were really unable to get together on the French question and admitted as much at his press conference on March 30, following Eden's departure from Washington. Part of the difference was based on practical considerations, at least from the American standpoint. As long as American forces were in North Africa and received the cooperation of the French regime there, the United States had every intention of continuing aid to the North African French.[21]

Meanwhile, General de Gaulle was in London and was eager to go to Algiers to complete the union of the French war effort. As his emissary, General Catroux had arrived in Algiers on March 25 to continue the discussions with General Giraud, now that the latter had publicly embraced liberalism and republicanism. General Catroux insisted upon two things: first, that General Giraud reply to the National Committee's memorandum of February 23 other than by a speech; second, that upon arrival of General de Gaulle in North Africa, he would have a completely free hand in all his speeches, actions and gestures. Finally, General de Gaulle also instructed General Catroux to obtain an explicit account from General Giraud as to how he envisaged

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21. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 83.

a union of the French forces. The date of General de Gaulle's departure for North Africa would be set upon receipt of a satisfactory response from General Giraud on these points.[22]

Although General de Gaulle was willing to wait for a reply from Algiers before proceeding there, other Fighting French leaders were considerably more impatient for the General to be off to Algiers. Léon Marchal, provisional leader of the Fighting French mission in Algiers, reported as early as March 13 that the political complexion had changed in Algiers since Professor Capitant had reported on it in London six weeks before, and later he reported that conditions were ripe for a de Gaulle visit. Soustelle noted considerable sentiment at Carlton Gardens for an immediate departure, which was accompanied by a sobering realization that General de Gaulle would either succeed in unification in Algiers or he would retire, perhaps forcibly for the duration of the war.[23] Catroux urged a delay of at least two or three weeks to allow the reaction in North Africa from Giraud's speech to settle. He felt a precipitous or early arrival of General de Gaulle might have a de-stabilizing effect on North Africa.

Catroux presented General de Gaulle's questions to General Giraud. Pending a more complete reply to the memorandum of the National Committee, Catroux reported Giraud was still attached to the idea of a central provisional power, of which he would be the leader.

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22. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, pp. 144, 146.

23. Ibid., p. 142. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout, vol. 2, p. 220.

Catroux understood Giraud's insistence upon being leader was a means of keeping up appearances. He, therefore, suggested to Giraud an arrangement whereby Giraud would be a constitutional chief of Fighting France with the title of Lieutenant-General of the Republic. General de Gaulle would preside over an executive and legislative organization, the choice of members of which would be made by Generals de Gaulle and Giraud.[24]

Giraud underlined his objections to the position of the National Committee. The nub of the matter was that the National Committee had taken a political position, while Giraud felt any authority established must be strictly a war time one without political complexion and without prejudicing in any way the future political institutions of France.[25]

General de Gaulle's reaction was swift, frosty, negative and scathing. He chided Catroux for making suggestions which had nothing to do with his instructions to Giraud before mentioning them to him. Even disregarding this and other grounds for objection, General de Gaulle repudiated Catroux's suggestions to Giraud on grounds that General Giraud was not qualified to lead the French war effort. General de Gaulle thought French public opinion distrusted General Giraud at least as much as it backed General de Gaulle.[26] This last reason alone

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24. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 148.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., pp. 148, 149.

was sufficient to justify chastising General Catroux, at least in General de Gaulle's own eyes.

Despite the tone of General de Gaulle's response, General Catroux' intentions were not naive, and his suggestions to General Giraud were not violations of at least the spirit of his instructions. Catroux realized that in any organization containing both Generals Giraud and de Gaulle, the latter would be dominant by force of personality, regardless of any hierarchical arrangements. In the arrangement he suggested, General Giraud might be the official head, but General de Gaulle as leader of the organs of government would be able to wield real power. That position plus the formidable personality of General de Gaulle would assure Gaullist domination.[27] Good intentions and subtle maneuvers would not satisfy General de Gaulle who sought sole leadership of the French movement.

Even if they had not been rejected by General de Gaulle, the suggestions made by General Catroux became moot on April 1 with General Giraud's formal reply to the National Committee's memorandum of February 23. General Catroux was prepared to take it immediately to London as the basis of establishing unity of the French forces. While it said nothing as to personalities or individual leadership, this document did go far in reconciling the views of the French

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27. General Catroux, Dans la bataille de Mediterrance, (Paris: Rene Juillard, 1949), pp. 353-355.

in London and with those in Algiers.[28]

Giraud's reply proceeded logically from the premise that unity could only be achieved on the basis of well-defined principles. The basic principles of agreement were defined by General Giraud in his March 14 speech and by the National Committee in the memorandum of February 23. The key principles were the repudiation of the 1940 Armistice, the assertion that the free expression of French sovereignty had been suspended by the German occupation and the denunciation of all legislation since June 22, 1940 as illegal. A "French Council of Overseas Territories" was proposed, which would exercise French sovereignty over the Empire until its powers could be delivered to a provisional government. Unification of the French armed forces was envisaged and the entry of France into the councils of victors was anticipated. A provisional government would be established under the Loi Trévenеuc of 1872. This act provided for a convocation of delegates in metropolitan France which would form a provisional government. Naturally, the Loi Trévenеuc could not be invoked until after the liberation of France. It was to be made clear to the French people that they alone would determine the construction of the provisional government.

Even before General Catroux could send the text of Giraud's reply to London, General de Gaulle informed him on April 11 of his intention to proceed immediately to Algiers. This information visibly disturbed Catroux. He felt General de Gaulle was dissatisfied, suspicious and

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28. Documents on American Foreign Relations, vol. 5, pp. 571-579.

bent on precipitating matters. He explained to Murphy and to Harold Macmillan, British Resident Minister in Algiers, that he had recommended a delay in the de Gaulle visit.[29] Apparently General de Gaulle failed to realize, as Catroux was all too aware, that a sizeable element of the French Army in North Africa was not favorably disposed towards him. For this reason, a visit by General de Gaulle to Algiers would probably precipitate matters with possibly unfortunate results for French unity. Catroux was simply urging caution until matters were somewhat more stable.

Both Macmillan and Murphy, who were quietly encouraging French unification, were in turn upset when Catroux stated an intention to withdraw from the negotiations if General de Gaulle disregarded his advice and proceeded to Algiers before the situation could be thoroughly explored and more detailed agreement reached. It appeared to Murphy at the moment that Catroux was leaning heavily in the direction of quitting.[30]

There was little chance of General de Gaulle being able to leave England at that time, according to Macmillan, because the British government did not feel the General had a good political case. Also, Macmillan felt that the presence of General de Gaulle in Algiers at that particular time would be a distracting influence on the time and

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29. Murphy to President/Secretary of State, Telegram 542, April 2, 1943, U.S. National Archives, Department of State, 851.01/2005.

30. Ibid.

attention of the Allied staff at the very moment when the Tunisian campaign was in a critical stage. Both General Eisenhower, Allied Commander-in-Chief, and Admiral Cunningham, Allied Naval Commander in the Mediterranean, concurred.[31]

Almost at the very moment on April 2 when Catroux was confiding his fears and apprehensions to Murphy and to Macmillan in Algiers, General de Gaulle called on Churchill to suggest that he and other members of the French National Committee proceed at once to Algiers. The Prime Minister agreed, provided General Eisenhower approved. The Foreign Office instructed Macmillan to bring the matter before General Eisenhower.[32] Interestingly enough, this meeting was one of the first, if not the first, meeting of the Prime Minister and General de Gaulle since Churchill had refused to see him again more than two months before. Apparently both participants attempted to keep the meeting amiable.[33]

Following discussions among the senior Allied Officers in Algiers, including General Catroux, Macmillan replied, quoting an opinion of the Allied High Command in the name of General Eisenhower. The message requested a delay in General de Gaulle's visit, because with the approaching crisis of battle, it would be undesirable to have at the

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31. Ibid.

32. Kittredge Diary, April 4, 1943.

33. Matthews to Secretary of State, Telegram 2374, April 3, 1943, U. S. National Archives, Department of State, 851.01/2010.

same time a protracted political crisis.[34] This message was transmitted by dispatch to the Foreign Office on April 4 and subsequently delivered to General de Gaulle the same day.

The reaction of General de Gaulle and some members of the French National Committee was immediate and violent. They erroneously interpreted the message as an expression of American hostility. In their anger they issued a communique which only further muddied the already disturbed waters. It took the next few days for the air to clear.

The immediate cause of the Gaullist eruption was the message purportedly from General Eisenhower which Macmillan had cabled to the Foreign Office. It covered both military and political considerations. General Eisenhower did not wish to place any impediments in the way of General de Gaulle's proposed visit to Algiers, which he earnestly hoped would lead to French union. He added a caveat by way of suggesting that General de Gaulle delay his visit until the groundwork for an agreement could be established, thereby ensuring its rapid consumation. As to the military considerations, General Eisenhower felt it undesirable to be distracted by a prolonged political crisis.[35]

A partial insight into the outrage felt by the Fighting French can be gained from Soustelle's account. They apparently did not understand

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34. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout, vol. 2, p. 224.

35. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 89.

why such a highly desired visit should be postponed after such an extensive build-up, at least in French minds, in Algiers and in London. In all fairness to the Fighting French, the political considerations for a postponement were insufficient reasons in view of the draft plan of unity Giraud had sent to Carlton Gardens. At this point, it would seem the Allies committed a tactical error by assigning this less than completely relevant reason, when they could have rested their position on strictly military grounds alone.

At that time the Tunisian campaign, which had bogged down just prior to Admiral Darlan's assassination in December, had been reopened and General Eisenhower's primary task was the expulsion of the Nazis from their last positions in North Africa. His main concern was prosecution of the war, not the resolution of French political problems. To the extent that a union of the French forces would work to the overall goal of defeating the Germans, General Eisenhower was ready to indulge the French generals. However, for the simple reason that first things must come first, the raging battle in Tunisia absorbed the attention of the Allied staffs. Politics, including a possible crisis, would have to wait.

The French National Committee regretted on April 5 the delay "which cannot be prolonged without serious disadvantage."[36] This communique was issued to the press independently of American or

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36. Ibid., p. 90.

British knowledge or consent. It reached the military and naval censors in the early evening and was accordingly referred to the Army Public Relations Officer and to Commander Kittredge on Admiral Stark's staff. The question of its release was discussed with members of the British Mission to the National Committee before referral to Admiral Stark and to Ambassador Winant, who had recently returned to London. Since the communique, although inaccurate and misleading, did not involve questions of military security, it was decided that it could not be stopped by the censors. Dispatches were then sent to the State Department and to General Eisenhower forewarning them of this unfortunate communique.[37]

Winant was correct in viewing the National Committee's statement as not being helpful and he was worried that its publication in the United States and in Great Britain would give rise to misinterpretations of the real reason for the postponement of General de Gaulle's visit. Eden agreed. He admitted that since military security was not involved, publication could not be prevented. The most Eden could suggest on April 6 was a Foreign Office statement concurring with the postponement of General de Gaulle's visit.[38]

Eden discussed the matter with Churchill, who shortly after noon the next day, April 7, issued a statement along the lines suggested

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37. Kittredge Diary, April 5, 1943.

38. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 90.

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37. Kittredge Diary, April 5, 1943.

38. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 90.

by Eden. He wished it to be known that he had been throughout "in the fullest agreement" with General Eisenhower in deprecating a visit by General de Gaulle during the battle crisis in Tunisia which required the "undivided attention" of the Allied High Command.[39]

While this statement helped to set the record straight, the damage of misinterpretation had generally been done in the British press which played on the more sensational aspects of the matter, and at the same time hinted at darker motives and sinister schemes. Only the London Times kept its editorial wits and noted that the wrong moment for a visit of such cardinal importance would hinder rather than help the cause of French unity. General Giraud was properly with his troops at the moment and the delay need not be long.[40]

While the French misunderstanding and subsequent outrage had been taken to the public, General de Gaulle, without publicity, requested Admiral Stark on April 6 to transmit a bitter protest to General Eisenhower for delaying his departure for Algiers. This message was described as a reply to the one General de Gaulle had received. Since no message for General de Gaulle from General Eisenhower had been received by the U.S. Communications Services, Admiral Stark returned the protest message to General de Gaulle with the suggestion that it be

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39. Enclosure (F) to COMNAVEU (Stark) letter to Vice Chief of Naval Operations (Horne), serial 0713, April 10, 1943.

40. Ibid. Also, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, pp. 90-91.

transmitted by the same channel through which the initial message was received. Admiral Stark also explained that the message from General Eisenhower was not a personal opinion, but the considered judgment of the Allied Command in North Africa, including the opinion of French officers, and that the Foreign Office had received the message from the British Resident Minister in Algiers.[41]

The effect of Admiral Stark's polite but firm recapitulation of these facts was apparently salutary in that it made General de Gaulle realize the necessity of soothing ruffled British and American feelings, even if it did not raise doubts in his mind of a possible erroneous interpretation of the message from Algiers in the first place. Later on April 6, the same day on which Admiral Stark returned General de Gaulle's message to General Eisenhower, General de Gaulle called on Eden and then on Winant to express regret for the statement issued by the National Committee the day before.[42]

General de Gaulle apparently did not realize or at least was unwilling to admit until April 7 that the message from General Eisenhower was not a personal communication but a statement of Allied opinion transmitted through Foreign Office channels. He expressed surprise at learning the real character of the message he received.

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41. Stark to de Gaulle, April 6, 1943, enclosure (E) to COMNAVEU (Stark) letter to Vice Chief of Naval Operations, serial 0713, April 10, 1943.

42. Kittredge Diary, April 6, 1943.

Under the circumstances he would prefer not to reply directly to General Eisenhower.[43]

The exact reasons General de Gaulle changed his mind are not clear. The fact that the initial message was delivered to him through Foreign Office channels should have indicated it was not a personal message from General Eisenhower, which would normally have been received by means of the U.S. communications services. This subtlety in the means of transmission could have been overlooked in the heat of the indignation which flared immediately in the National Committee. Catroux agreed with Murphy and Macmillan that the situation had been grossly misinterpreted and insisted to General de Gaulle on an immediate public clarification.[44] Admiral Stark's explanation was undoubtedly a contributing factor.

Even though he understood the situation, General de Gaulle made no effort to correct the sensational publicity which accompanied the statement of the National Committee. He made no effort to soften the harsh implications of the comment that "serious disadvantage" would result from a delay of his visit to Algiers. Any palliative effect of the General's acceptance of the facts as they were was lost on Kittredge, who commented, "He stands by his rotten communique."[45]

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43. Ibid., April 7, 1943.

44. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 92.

45. Kittredge note, Box 203, File: de Gaulle - Giraud Relations, COMNAVEU files.

One obvious result of this relatively minor but emotionally charged series of events was the bad taste it left all around. General de Gaulle was once again thwarted in his attempt to go to North Africa, where he devoutly felt his duty called and where he hoped to unify the French war effort by bringing North Africa into Fighting France. The Americans were understandably vexed by the seemingly almost deliberate misinterpretation of General Eisenhower's message. A situation such as this one was hardly the kind that would inspire confidence or foster harmonious relations. Coming as it did after several other situations of a similar nature, it was all the more unfortunate.

General de Gaulle in his Mémoires continues to confuse matters by claiming that on April 2 Churchill announced General Eisenhower had requested a postponement of the trip.[46] Since Eisenhower's message was dispatched on April 4, as a response to an inquiry originating from the meeting of the General and the Prime Minister on April 2, General de Gaulle's recollection is erroneous. The General is also in error when he claims he himself ascertained the fact that General Eisenhower (presumably personally) had not personally requested a delay of his visit. General de Gaulle never took the initiative to ascertain the character of General Eisenhower's message, as he claimed. Admiral Stark, General Catroux and possibly others, endeavored to enlighten the General on the true interpretation of that message.

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46. De Gaulle, Unity, p. 107.

However, something can be said for General de Gaulle. Churchill apparently was still opposed to General de Gaulle visiting Algiers at that particular moment, and he sought General Eisenhower's views to back up the decision already contemplated, to refuse air transport for General de Gaulle and his party.[47] It was not only a wise step, but also highly convenient for Churchill to suggest consulting General Eisenhower before authorizing the trip. Churchill was well aware that the Tunisian campaign was in full swing and he may very well have anticipated General Eisenhower's request for a delay. When such a request was made for undeniably sound military reasons, Churchill was relieved of the onus of again having to forbid General de Gaulle from going to Algiers. General de Gaulle may have realized Churchill's tactic, which would help to explain his indignation and frustration, over and above simply being thwarted. He was right when he asserted Churchill opposed his trip. Unfortunately, General de Gaulle presented only part of the picture.

The final word was from General de Gaulle who sent a glowing personal message to General Eisenhower on April 8. He expressed the "heartfelt wishes" of the French people at the moment when "a great and hard battle was taking place."[48] This message, which was

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47. Kittredge memorandum, April 6, 1943, Box 203, File: de Gaulle - Giraud Relations, COMNAVEU files.

48. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 152.

sweetness and light in the essence, is the only document relating to the Eisenhower message episode that General de Gaulle published in his Mémoires. Taken by itself, it would give an erroneous impression. The most reasonable construction to be placed on it is a graceful conclusion to a frustrating and embarrassing episode.

This affair also exacted a price among the leadership of the French National Committee. The original draft of General de Gaulle's bitter protest to General Eisenhower was so harsh that Massigli thought of resigning when he first saw it. The text was softened before it was sent to Admiral Stark, who wisely returned it to General de Gaulle. The struggle within the National Committee apparently continued. Admiral Stark felt there was a definite possibility that Massigli and Catroux would quit the National Committee if the Fighting French and North African French failed to unite. He also had the impression, which was shared by Kittredge, that in many cases, General de Gaulle's "first, and better, and even more generous impulses" were sometimes nullified and reversed by his staff.[49] Beyond this it is impossible to describe the tensions and conflicting views that undoubtedly existed within the National Committee.

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49. Stark to Horne, April 13, 1943, in "Selected Documents from Correspondence of Admiral Harold R. Stark, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe," vol. 3, p. 44.

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States which had appeared in La Marseillaise, an independent French newspaper in London. This journal usually gave vent to the more extreme views of the Fighting French. Recently it had been particularly virulent in its criticism of the United States. Massigli discussed American-Fighting French difficulties with Kittredge. He sent Admiral Stark the text of General de Gaulle's glowing message to General Eisenhower, which the Admiral thought to be a "fine message."[50] On April 9 Massigli called on Ambassador Winant to express regret over the Fighting French misinterpretation of American policy.[51]

These gestures were noticed and appreciated. Admiral Stark responded gracefully in a letter to General de Gaulle in which he commented favorably upon General de Gaulle's conviction of the desire of the French for "full and increasingly effective cooperation in the Allied effort." He was sure General Eisenhower would be pleased to receive such a cordial expression of French confidence from General de Gaulle.[52]

The steps taken by Massigli to restore relations to a more pleasant and acceptable state could only affect the surface. Massigli as a trained diplomat was undoubtedly aware that some amount of good will, or at least an absence of ill-will, was necessary for any kind of cooperation

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50. Ibid.

51. Kittredge Diary, April 9, 1943.

52. Stark to de Gaulle, April 13, 1943, Box 204, File: April, 1943, COMNAVEU files.

of the Fighting French with the British and the Americans. Good intentions could not obliterate basic differences, but they could help to allay suspicions. Good will was needed more than ever in early April 1943, because of the rapid succession of controversies and incidents which highlighted the basic differences between American and Fighting French policies. The Fighting French viewed this series as a deliberate attempt by the United States to discredit General de Gaulle and the French National Committee in the eyes of the world.[53]

The French bill of particulars was long and varied. They attributed to United States pressure the British refusal to allow General de Gaulle to visit Africa. They saw the American commitment to extend lend-lease aid to General Giraud as a means of building up him and his "Vichy supporters" as the future government of France. They contrasted the courtesies and facilities extended to the Giraud missions to the United States with American refusal to give material aid to them or even to recognize them as representatives of French liberal opinion. They were particularly vexed by the United States transportation of Colonel Lebel, Giraud's representative, to French Guiana while the Gaullist representative was stranded, following a Gaullist "revolt" in that obscure colony. They objected to American pressure to keep Gaullist seamen on non-Fighting French naval and merchant ships in United States ports. They viewed the JAMAIQUE incident as an American

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53. Kittredge memorandum, March 30, 1943, Box 204, File: March 1943, COMNAVEU files.

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53. Kittredge memorandum, March 30, 1943, Box 204, File: March 1943, COMNAVEU files.

effort to induce the British into taking repressive measures against the Fighting French in the British Isles. They suspected United States sources of inspiring a series of articles in British journals which stressed the undemocratic features of the Fighting French organization. They felt these articles reflected Hull's view that General de Gaulle was an apprentice dictator who must be politically destroyed as soon as possible.

Massigli and two other members of the National Committee generally protested against such interpretations of United States policy, but they had to agree that many committee members accepted them, probably, including General de Gaulle himself.[54]

The bill of particulars was merely symptomatic of the irreconcilable point at issue between the United States and Fighting France on the political question of recognition. General de Gaulle insisted that he and his group represented France and French interests. Washington was determined to leave political questions in abeyance until after military victory. Hull complained that all General de Gaulle wanted to talk about was politics and that he had never engaged in a serious military conversation.[55] There could be no compromise on this point. Potential difficulties were compounded by the incompatibility of the personalities of the President and the General, whose temperamental nature was

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54. Ibid.

55. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 3, p. 10.

well known in London. Therefore, it was not surprising that at moments that might strain even the most compatible personalities and identity of interests, strong feelings, suspicions and outright animosities would be aroused. The wonder is that under these circumstances men such as Massigli, Catroux, Kittredge and Admiral Stark could keep their wits about them, soften the blows and restore any damage done as best they could.

CHAPTER VI

RECRUITING OF SEAMEN

The fusion of the Fighting French forces under General de Gaulle with those of the North African administration, under General Giraud, would result in a more concerted and efficient French war effort. But the existence of two separate French groups produced specific negative results. The recruiting of merchant seamen by one group from the other was one negative result. The problem became a matter of diplomatic concern.

Following the North African campaign, many merchant ships then in North African ports were chartered by the Allied Commander-in-Chief from the Giraud North African Administration to carry supplies to North Africa from United States and United Kingdom ports. In several instances when the ships were in American or British ports, members of the crew and at times even officers either left or threatened to leave their ships to join the Fighting French forces. Such desertions presented a possible delay in the sailing of the ships because of a lack of manpower. They were an acute embarassment for the Allies, but they were a golden opportunity for the Fighting French. Even if he so desired, General de Gaulle could hardly turn away men who chose to rally to him. But on the other hand, the

potential threat such desertions posed for Allied shipping could be embarassing for him. If the Fighting French could convince the United States they controlled the crews, then such an act would be tantamount to a tacit recognition that the French National Committee had a right to do so. Any amount of recognition at the expense of the Giraud authorities would be a positive gain for the National Committee.

The situation became so acute that Secretary of State Hull requested Admiral Stark through the Embassy in London on February 6, 1943 to take up with the French National Committee the question of recruitment of seamen by the Fighting French Recruiting Office in New York from two ships then in New York. They were the naval tanker LOT and the merchant ship WYOMING. About 30 men had been recruited by the local New York Fighting French Recruiting Office, thereby taking the services of those men away from the North African French ships concerned. It was not clear whether the seamen voluntarily left their ships or whether the Fighting French recruiters actively induced them to do so. The reasons the seamen left their ships would make a decided difference in the culpability of the Fighting French and should have made a difference in the reaction of the United States. In either case, the result was the same. As Hull pointed out, it severely crippled the operation of the ships. [1]

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1. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, (6 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), vol. 2, p. 202.

Admiral Stark was requested to ask General de Gaulle to take immediate steps to correct the situation and to insure that no further recruiting of personnel from other services in the United Nations war effort would take place. The Secretary of State referred to an agreement among the maritime United Nations to forbear from recruiting each others merchant seamen. Recruiting of naval ratings was dismissed as impossible.[2] Up to that time, the United States had tacitly consented to some recruiting of personnel in the United States, by the Fighting French. Of course, the privilege could be withdrawn in case of abuse.

On February 8 the matter was first taken up with Admiral Philippe-Marie Auboyneau, Commander-in-Chief of the Fighting French Navy. The next day, Admiral Auboyneau said he had discussed the matter with General de Gaulle and that they did not consider the recruiting to be wrong. He maintained that the seamen who left LOT and WYOMING had done so of their own volition. Although he did not say so specifically, he implied that the Fighting French recruiters in New York had not induced the desertions but rather that the seamen had volunteered. As far as the French National Committee was concerned, the appearance of volunteers was agreeable and besides there was little they could do about it. These seamen had in the past been ordered by their officers to fire on Americans, which they did

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2. Ibid.

not want to do. For this reason, Admiral Auboyneau said they had lost faith in their present commanders. The agreement among the maritime United Nations did not apply, he claimed, because the sailors were simply changing French ships and France was one nation. Therefore, how could it apply? The Fighting French would permit anyone to go over to General Giraud if he desired.[3]

Since informal conversations had been fruitless, Admiral Stark sent a formal statement of the United States position to General de Gaulle on February 10 along with a personal letter in which he stressed the urgency of operational necessity. The United States rested its case on this point throughout the ensuing negotiations. Admiral Stark felt strongly that it was not the moment to permit unnecessarily irritating incidents to complicate efforts being made to unify the French war effort.[4]

The United States Government had arranged for these vessels to carry needed supplies to North Africa, Admiral Stark pointed out. The loss of the services of the 30 seamen severely crippled the operation of the vessels. The Fighting French Delegation in

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3. Oliphant memorandum, February 9, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, files (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU files), Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

4. Stark to de Gaulle, February 10, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVUE files. Admiral Stark referred to an agreement among the maritime United Nations not "to recruit or to accept sailors from ships of another service participating in the United Nations war effort without the consent of the representatives of other services concerned."

Washington was requested to take immediate and appropriate action to assure the return of the seamen to their ships and to prevent recruiting in the future of seamen from other services participating in the common war effort, in accordance with the relevant United Nations agreement.

The note of urgency was echoed again with the statement that it was obviously impossible to permit vital war services to be interrupted or severely embarassed by unauthorized recruiting. Admiral Stark hoped that General de Gaulle would take such action as to make unnecessary a direct intervention of the United States Government which might necessitate a "re-examination" of the conditions under which the Fighting French were authorized to recruit personnel on American soil.[5]

General de Gaulle replied formally on February 13. He declared the seamen had acted spontaneously. Indeed, Adrien Tixier, Chief of the Fighting French Delegation in Washington, had forbidden the recruiting service to carry on propaganda among the crews of LOT and WYOMING or to make contact with them outside of the Fighting French New York headquarters. However, Fighting France was not in a position to refuse a welcome to Frenchmen who desired to assume their national obligations in its ranks. Furthermore it was morally impossible to ask the sailors to be returned to their ships and thus be

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5. Ibid.

exposed to serious punishment for their decision to give expression, in the only manner left to them in the absence of legal French authority, to the fulfillment of their duty as Frenchmen.[6]

General de Gaulle observed that the sailors did not bind themselves to the Fighting French in any military capacity. Even though inconveniences resulting from such recruiting were regrettable, the ultimate solution must be arrived at by a direct arrangement between Fighting France and the French North African authorities.

At this time the positions of the parties were firm. The United States claimed the exigencies of operational necessity demanded subordination of all other considerations. The Fighting French, while regretting any inconvenience to the war effort, took their stand on political rather than on operational grounds. They denied active recruiting (the evidence tended to support them), but once the seamen had volunteered, the Fighting French denied any duty or obligation to return them to their former ships. In this respect the French probably were on firm ground, since they were not a party to any agreement not to recruit from the ranks of other services, whatever the ethics of the matter might be. On another and more practical ground, the Fighting French could not very well refuse enlistment to men who had not only volunteered, but who also had deserted Vichyite officers of doubtful loyalty. Some Vichyite officers had ordered the seamen to fire on the

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6. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 203.

Americans in November, 1942. Regardless of any subsequent political embarassment, once the desertions and subsequent enlistments in the Fighting French forces had been made public, if Fighting France returned these men to their ships they would obviously tend to forfeit the confidence and respect of their followers, to say nothing of compromising their most important claim: unequivocal, total and unrelenting opposition to everything directly or indirectly associated with Vichy.

The French National Committee was careful to avoid the onus of delaying the sailing of any ships because of their recruiting activities. Their interest was political. But gains could be made, as well as losses avoided. If the National Committee could induce the United States to request the National Committee to order the seamen back to their ships, the National Committee would have achieved at least a tacit recognition of their right to do so. This specific issue did not arise until the JAMAIQUE incident at the end of March, 1943. In the meantime General de Gaulle was content with obtaining concessions from the United States as to when and in what circumstances the Fighting French could accept seamen from North African ships, and the United States continued to insist the ships sail on schedule.

Admiral Stark informed General de Gaulle on February 14 that he could not subscribe to the action taken by the French National Committee. He urged positive steps not only to relieve the present situation, but also to prevent a recurrence. He based his position

on the non-recruiting agreement among the United Nations and urged the National Committee to reconsider its position.[7]

That same day, Commander Kittredge of Admiral Stark's staff called on Gaston Palewski, a member of General de Gaulle's staff. Palewski reiterated the position of the French National Committee. He rebutted successfully Admiral Stark's argument that the non-recruiting agreement applied, by pointing out that General de Gaulle had not been consulted as to Allied arrangements in North Africa and would not be bound to any agreement to which the French National Committee was not a party. He also pointed out that it would be impossible to insist that the 30 seamen return to the LOT and WYOMING in New York because of the punishment to which they would be undoubtedly submitted for their choice to serve with Fighting France.[8]

Kittredge explained the United States' position was based on operational necessity. Domestic issues must yield place to the military task of defeating the common enemy. He intimated that the United States might have to take drastic steps to prevent a recurrence of incidents tending to impede military action and thus to help the enemy.[9]

Incidents similar to LOT and WYOMING had occurred in British

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7. Stark to de Gaulle, February 14, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

8. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 204.

9. Kittredge memorandum, "Recruiting of Seamen,", Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

ports. In fact, a Fighting French recruiting officer had been arrested by the British, but he was subsequently released with a warning to refrain from such activities. The British agreed upon prompt action at a meeting at the Admiralty on February 13. Admiral Stark was informed that the following steps were being taken with respect to ships already in United Kingdom ports:

(1) Men on shore would be informed that they must remain with their ships. British authorities would not permit them to join Fighting France and would deport deserters to North Africa.

(2) Any man refusing to return to his ship in spite of this warning would be forcibly returned if the ship were in port.

(3) British authorities would impress on masters of ships that there must be no victimization of men who intended to join General de Gaulle, but were persuaded to return voluntarily.

(4) Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, would be asked to arrange to inform crews of all ships sailing for British ports that they would not be permitted to desert to Fighting France on arrival.[10] The British authorities were agreed that the only real, long term solution would be an agreement between the Fighting French and the North African authorities to refrain from suborning each other's men.

The British position was important not only because similar

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10. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 205.

problems were faced in United Kingdom ports, but also because the deserting seamen from LOT and WYOMING had arrived in Halifax. General de Gaulle had requested transportation for these men to England where they would join the Fighting French forces. Under British policy as decided upon on February 13, these men would be returned forcibly, if need be, to their ships. However, Tixier in Washington had convinced Lord Halifax of the necessity for some modification of British policy.[11] Modification was necessary, since men returned to their ships under such circumstances would in all probability only cause trouble, which might very well produce consequences worse than the present shortage of man power. Also, the Fighting French would be in an intolerable position if they were unable to accept volunteers. Halifax recommended modification of the then current British policy.

The suggestions made by Lord Halifax bore fruit. Freeman Matthews, chargé d'affaires at the Embassy in London, reported on February 25 that the British had modified the previous policy to the extent that authorization was given for the enlistment by Fighting France and subsequent transportation to England of seamen who positively refused to serve under their present officers.[12] Admiral

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11. Kittredge memorandum, February 28, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

12. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 208.

Stark thought it advisable for both countries to follow the same procedure. The new policy was undoubtedly wise, since it avoided the possibility of further trouble, including mutiny. It was also humane, since it prevented the deserters from being returned to their ships where they would undoubtedly have been punished as much for their desertion as for their politics. But, it did not solve the problem of manning ships which were badly needed to carry supplies to North Africa.

General de Gaulle suggested a possible solution. After disclaiming any responsibility of the French National Committee for desertions, which were "entirely spontaneous" and "inspired by profound reasons," he declared the French National Committee stood ready to place on board LOT and WYOMING replacements drawn from units of the French fleet then in New York and also from a pool at St. Pierre. He hoped that this proposal would be taken by the United States Government as new proof of the National Committee's determination to assure French participation in the war effort of the United Nations.[13]

If the United States were to accept this suggestion, the ships no doubt could be expected to sail on schedule. It would also permit General de Gaulle to appear cooperative in the war effort, as well as tacitly concede the right of the French National Committee to man if not control the ships. Such a concession would not only violate the spirit of the charter parties, but it would also tend to undermine the

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13. Ibid., p. 204.

authority of the French North African authorities, with whom the United States at that time was cooperating to a great extent.

While awaiting an answer from Washington as to whether to accept General de Gaulle's suggestion, Admiral Stark on February 18 suggested the issuance of orders to the Fighting French agents in the United States to refuse in the future to enroll men from French ships from North Africa. [14]

Discussions between British and Fighting French representatives continued. The French claimed that the masters of certain of the French ships were anti-Allied and untrustworthy. Hence they insisted that loyal Frenchmen could not consent to serve under them. Reports from British security officers tended to corroborate the French claim as to the doubtful loyalty of some of the officers of vessels from North Africa. [15]

Palewski told Kittredge on February 20 that the North African mission in Washington had opened recruiting stations and that they were actively seeking recruits to serve under General Giraud. He claimed that some men who had already contracted engagements with the Fighting French forces had been approached by Giraud's recruiters and had actually volunteered for and had been accepted for service

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14. Stark to de Gaulle, February 18, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

15. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 206.

under Giraud. For this reason, the French National Committee hesitated to issue orders to the Fighting French services to refuse recruits from French North African services.[16]

Kittredge reported this complaint to Matthews. He suggested an inquiry be made about the arrangements approved and added that it would be of particular interest to know whether Giraud's representatives had agreed not to recruit personnel already enrolled for de Gaulle's forces.[17] The basis for Kittredge's suggested inquiry was a dispatch from a French news agency in Washington and published in London in the French journal France. It reported that so far 200 volunteers had enlisted in the Giraud forces and that volunteers from French Naval units currently in United States ports would be accepted. The article claimed recruits were being sent to Fort Benning, Georgia. Kittredge sent Matthews a translation.

Matthews reported this claim to Washington on February 20 and again on February 22.[18] He said Admiral Stark would like to know whether any such arrangements stipulated that Giraud's representatives should refuse to accept enlistments from persons who have previously signed enrollments in the Fighting French forces. Hull replied on

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16. Ibid. The substance of this telegram was derived from a Kittredge memorandum of February 20, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

17. Kittredge memorandum, February 22, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

18. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, pp. 206, 207.

February 24 that he would be glad to receive information concerning any specific cases which the French National Committee would like to bring to his attention.[19] The American files contain no record of any complaint by the French National Committee of any specific cases of recruiting by Giraud's representatives in the United States.

Meanwhile Hull on February 23, refused General de Gaulle's offer of replacements of seamen for LOT and WYOMING by saying simply that the Navy Department was not disposed to accept General de Gaulle's proposal of a Fighting French naval detachment.[20] He reported the Navy Department had accepted Admiral Stark's recommendation and the United States would follow the same procedures as the British in dealing with this problem. However, the procedures referred to by Hull were those agreed upon at the Admiralty on February 13, before Lord Halifax' suggested modifications were adopted. Admiral Stark reported the change in British procedures to Matthews, who in turn reported it to Hull.[21] Admiral Stark was still of the opinion that it was advisable that both countries follow the same procedure. He recommended the United States permit the Fighting French to enlist seamen who positively refused to return to their ships.

The Americans apparently adjusted their procedures to coincide

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19. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 207.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 208.

with British procedures for handling deserters.[22] British and Fighting French officials remained concerned and sought to ameliorate the situation without jeopardizing or compromising their basic positions. Members of the French National Committee and, in particular, René Massigli, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, expressed appreciation for the importance of preventing conflict between different French services participating in the common war effort. To this end, instructions were given to Guy de Charbonnières and Colonel Pechkoff, members of the Catroux Mission to Algiers, to negotiate immediately, if possible, an agreement with General Giraud on recruiting. They left London by air enroute Algiers on February 23 to undertake these negotiations.[23]

However, Robert Murphy in Algiers reported to Hull on March 8, that no progress towards an agreement on recruiting could be made until the arrival of General Georges Catroux, because the members of the de Gaulle mission in Algiers had no authority even to discuss the matter.[24] This report is contrary to the impression given by Massigli. It is unclear whether Admiral Stark and Kittredge knew of Murphy's report or were informed of possible changes in the instructions to the delegates. At any rate, no unfortunate consequences resulted, even

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22. Kittredge memorandum, February 25, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

23. Ibid.

24. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 213.

though a delay in opening negotiations was experienced.

The British thought it would be folly to create a new source of friction in the de Gaulle - Giraud rivalry and to risk immobilization of valuable shipping for a few extra recruits to the Fighting French navy. This position was made known to the Fighting French officials in London and similar pressure was applied in Algiers. The British took additional measures to discourage desertions. The Foreign Office instructed Harold Macmillan, Minister Resident at Allied Headquarters in Algiers, to urge on General Giraud the importance of an early agreement with General de Gaulle on recruiting and likewise of taking steps that no vessel sail for British or American ports with officers whose records might provoke the crews to desert.[25]

The problem of rival loyalties obviously could only be solved definitively by the conclusion of an agreement between the two French parties. Additional British pressure was brought to bear on the Fighting French by a warning from Foreign Secretary Eden to Massigli, and by instructions to Halifax to urge Tixier to stop all soliciting for recruits by Fighting French agents. Also, Macmillan in Algiers urged the necessity of an agreement on General Giraud. British port officials brought all possible pressure to bear on the seamen on board the North African ships to prevent their desertion. There is no evidence indicating desertions of the magnitude of those of LOT and

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25. Ibid., p. 208.

WYOMING until the JAMAIQUE incident at the end of March.[26]

Discussions continued between officials of the French National Committee and the American staff. On February 27 Admiral Stark informed Massigli, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, of the procedures adopted by the United States authorities and he again rejected General de Gaulle's offer of sailors from St. Pierre. He asked whether instructions had been sent to the Fighting French representatives in the United States to suspend recruiting of men and acceptance of enlistments of deserters from North African services, pending negotiation of a de Gaulle-Giraud agreement.

In referring to steps the United States authorities proposed to take to prevent delays in shipping by desertions of crew members to join the Fighting French, Admiral Stark said sternly that the United States Naval Authorities hoped for and expected the full cooperation of Fighting France in making the measures effective. The Admiral assured Massigli the United States Government desired to prevent the recruiting by any French service of men belonging to any other French service. He offered to forward information of any specific cases of enlistment of Fighting French personnel by the Giraud mission. After Matthews at the Embassy had agreed with the text, Kittredge delivered a letter to Massigli from Admiral Stark which stated the American position.[27]

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26. Kittredge memorandum, February 25, 1943.

27. Stark to Massigli, February 27, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

Acting in behalf of the National Committee, Massigli formally replied to Admiral Stark on March 3. They recognized that the immobilization of merchant ships by virtue of loss of crew members, could result in serious inconvenience. The Committee was, therefore, instructing its representatives in the United States as follows:

> While abstaining from any propaganda, they may continue to accept the voluntary enlistment of officers, ratings and sailors from the crews of these merchant vessels. Such recruits will receive, however, from our own delegations the order to return to their ships to which they will be temporarily assigned.... Their cases will be dealt with later, either individually or by the application of a general arrangement to be reached on the organization of French forces.[28]

This letter, which presumably followed discussions in the National Committee, was a formal statement of policy, which closely followed what Massigli said to Kittredge on February 27. That conversation was of more than routine significance because it amplified the formal position of the National Committee.

Massigli revealed his personal desire to reach a solution to the recruiting problem with the Giraud authorities, which would be acceptable as well to the British and Americans. He pointed out that it was morally difficult, if not impossible, for the French National Committee to refuse to accept the spontaneous offers of Frenchmen from North Africa to join Fighting French forces. These forces

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28. Massigli to Stark, March 3, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruitment, COMNAVEU files. Substance reported in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 211.

represented unconditional resistance to Germany and to the collaboration policy of Vichy. The Fighting French delegates in the United States had been instructed not to solicit recruits and to urge volunteers to return temporarily to their services, pending an agreement with General Giraud on personnel transfers.

The Fighting French had not been informed in detail of the procedures adopted by the British to prevent desertions of seamen from North African ships in favor of Fighting France, he said. Only the previous week, 110 of 140 men in one ship had volunteered for service with the Fighting French forces, most of whom were persuaded by the Fighting French services to return to their ships. In regard to the dispatch of Charbonnières and Colonel Pechkoff to Algiers, he said they would propose that about one half of the French merchant ships in North and West Africa be turned over to the National Committee to operate. In this way seamen in North Africa who wished to join Fighting France could be authorized to do so.[29]

The French at this stage were maneuvering rather adroitly. By forbearing from active recruiting of seamen, the National Committee appeared to be cooperating with the Allies, at least to the extent of not suborning seamen. As to bona fide volunteers, it was not only morally impossible on ethical grounds, which was Lord Halifax' point, but also

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29. Kittredge memorandum, March 1, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

on political grounds, to return them forcibly to their ships. After all, these Frenchmen elected to serve under the Cross of Lorraine. For these reasons, the proscription of solicitation of recruits was the extent of the concessions the Fighting French could or would make. Even so, it was not a real concession as events subsequently proved. The spirit of Gaullism as uncompromising resistance to Germany was beginning to wax strong, especially among the rank and file of Frenchmen overseas and in the metropole. The allure of the Cross of Lorraine was that of Frenchmen who had not lost faith in France or compromised their honor in the dark days of 1940 and 1941. The Fighting French had no real need to recruit actively.

The over-riding motive of General de Gaulle in this issue was the enhancement of the position of the National Committee in two ways: first, in the physical sense, by attracting adherents, arms and equipment; and second, in the political sense, by achieving recognition by the United States and Great Britain of his movement as the true representative of France. Massigli's suggestion to Kittredge to divide the merchant ships in North Africa between the Giraud and de Gaulle authorities appeared to be a superficial solution to the problem of the deserting seamen. It would result in an accretion of physical power to the National Committee. It would also be a form of implied recognition of the National Committee. Despite a lack of specific evidence, it can be concluded that Kittredge and Admiral Stark saw through this suggestion and they were relieved when it was not pursued. Why the

French did not pursue it is a matter for conjecture in the absence of concrete evidence.

Desertion from North African French ships continued apace as seamen continued to volunteer for service with the Fighting French. British security officers found that desertions varied directly with the attitudes and records of the ships'officers, some of whom were not only pro-Vichy, but also anti-American and anti-British. Fifty-one seamen from the battleship RICHELIEU, then in New York for repairs, had deserted and were currently in Halifax, with about 50 others awaiting transportation to England.[30]

The American press reported the increase in desertions and unconfirmed reports were received in London that a number of seamen from RICHELIEU and other French naval ships had been arrested and were being detained by American immigration authorities at Ellis Island. On March 6 and 8 American newsmen in London asked General de Gaulle to comment, but he refused. Instead, he requested that no reports be published on similar developments in United Kingdom ports.[31]

Against this background, General de Gaulle requested a conference with Admiral Stark on March 11 to discuss the situation. This conference gave rise to what most charitably could be called a

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30. Kittredge memorandum, March 11, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

31. Kittredge memorandum, March 18, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

misunderstanding.[32]

Admiral Stark was accompanied by Kittredge, and General de Gaulle by his Chief of Staff, Colonel Pierre Billotte. Charles Peake, the British Foreign Office representative to the French National Committee, was also present.[33]

General de Gaulle repeated to Admiral Stark the suggestions already submitted by Massigli in his letter of March 3 to the effect that seamen voluntarily joining the Fighting French forces in ports other than North African ports would receive orders from the Fighting French delegations to return to their ships to which they would be temporarily assigned, pending a final agreement on the organization of French forces.

Admiral Stark countered with the suggestion that instead of enrolling such men in the Fighting French forces, they should be persuaded to return to their ships on the understanding that on their arrival in North Africa they would be permitted to exercise the option of joining Fighting French forces, if they so desired. He indicated the seamen could proceed to a Fighting French base for enrollment.

Kittredge specifically noted that on this latter point, General de Gaulle stated he was prepared to agree that the men should not be enrolled but returned to their ships, provided that they would be

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32. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 214.

33. Kittredge memorandum, March 11, 1943.

guaranteed that upon arrival in a North African port they could join Fighting France. If a large number indicated a desire to join Fighting France, General de Gaulle desired to place a Fighting French representative on board the ship to make sure the guarantee would be observed.

Admiral Stark was prepared to transmit a recommendation to the United States authorities for such a procedure with suitable guarantees. This procedure would permit seamen, on returning to North Africa, to exercise the option of joining the Fighting French forces if they so desired. Both men agreed that a dispatch embodying this oral understanding would be prepared by Admiral Stark and that it would be submitted to General de Gaulle before transmission to Washington.

After Kittredge drafted the dispatch, it was approved by Admiral Stark and sent to General de Gaulle for his comments and perusal. It was returned on March 31, with several minor changes, all of which were incorporated. General de Gaulle concurred with the first sentence of paragraph 6:

> Second, in case of war vessels engaged in active operations or of merchant or supply ships, required to return immediately with cargoes for North Africa, de Gaulle proposed to order Fighting French recruits from such vessels to make the return voyage, with the understanding they be permitted on arrival in a North African port to leave their ships to join Fighting French forces. (Emphasis added)

But, in regard to the second sentence which read, "De Gaulle's agreement is conditional on guarantees being given that these men may join Fighting France after arrival in North Africa." General

de Gaulle suggested it read as follows:

> General de Gaulle accepted at my suggestion that instructions be given that after their enrollment orders should be given to their sailors by General de Gaulle to return to their own ships for the voyage to Africa.[34] (Emphasis added)

Admiral Stark included in the dispatch all the changes suggested by General de Gaulle, with the exception of this one. The Admiral so notified General de Gaulle on March 16, saying:

> There seems to have been a complete misunderstanding on this one point, both as to the concrete suggestions to be made to the American authorities and to the instructions which you might give to the Fighting French representatives in the United States.[35]

He sent a memorandum indicating necessary corrections in the minutes of their conversation of March 11, which Colonel Billotte prepared and submitted to the American staff. He again asked the General specifically whether he would be willing to suspend enrollment in American ports of seamen from North African ships, pending agreement with the North African authorities. If so, Admiral Stark was willing to recommend to the United States Government a guarantee that any such seamen desiring to join Fighting France would be permitted to do so upon arrival in a North African port.

Kittredge did not see the incident as a misunderstanding. He told Matthews that General de Gaulle "welshed" after orally agreeing

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34. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 214.

35. Stark to de Gaulle, March 16, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruitment, COMNAVEU files.

with Admiral Stark on March 11.[36] On the same day the Admiral wrote to General de Gaulle, Kittredge asked Colonel Billotte to correct at least for the record, the minutes of the Stark-de Gaulle conversation he prepared. The Billotte minutes omitted any reference to Admiral Stark's suggestion that formal enrollment by the Fighting French representatives in the United States might be delayed until after the arrival of these ships in North African ports. Kittredge suggested that this omission might explain General de Gaulle's letter of March 13. Kittredge included Admiral Stark's outline of his own comments:

> After discussion, General de Gaulle accepted my suggestion that men from ships be not enrolled in America by Fighting France, but if possible, be persuaded by Fighting French representatives to remain on their ships for the return journey on the understanding that they be permitted on arrival in North Africa to leave to join Fighting French forces if they so desire. General de Gaulle's agreement is conditional on guarantees being given that this will be permitted. He would wish to send representatives with such ships to North Africa to safeguard their interests and insure observation of guarantees. I urged that the most important objective was to keep these ships running and that so far as possible other questions be subordinated to this. Agreement was expressed by General de Gaulle to my statement.[37]

Kittredge requested the record of conversation be corrected.

The American files contain no reply to or rebuttal of Kittredge's version of the conversation or even any reference to a French response.

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36. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, p. 214.

37. Kittredge to Billotte, March 16, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

From this apparent silence it may be concluded either that the French acquiesced to the American version and sought to extricate themselves by ignoring it, or that they considered it so inconsequential as not to merit a reply. The only evaluation of record is Kittredge's word "welshed" which implies a certain amount of bad faith. If this is so, General de Gaulle's action was particularly high-handed and unpraiseworthy. If he had second thoughts in good faith, he could have communicated these to Admiral Stark with a reference to the desires of the National Committee. The result could have been the same but hard feelings and implications of dishonesty would have been avoided. Beyond these few observations, further conjecture is pointless.

Nothing was heard from General de Gaulle or his staff at 4 Carlton Gardens until March 22. General de Gaulle replied to Admiral Stark's request that the Fighting French refuse enrollment to sailors by asking them to remain on their vessels subject "to certain possible guarantees on their return to the port of departure," as the General put it. He curtly observed that he could hardly see how the Fighting French authorities could give orders to sailors not under their orders.[38]

Admiral Stark's reply on March 26 was dignified, but frosty in a no-nonsense tone. He rebutted General de Gaulle's snide comment with the observation that the Fighting French could give advice (not

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38. De Gaulle to Stark, March 22, 1943, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, pp. 215-216.

orders) and use their influence to persuade personnel to remain in their ships, which were required to return immediately to North Africa with cargoes of vital war material. He repeated his query as to whether the National Committee would be willing to suspend recruiting in the United States, particularly since the Giraud mission had already agreed to suspend recruiting of the Fighting French personnel.

Admiral Stark reviewed his conversation with General de Gaulle at which time he approved appropriate guarantees to seamen wishing to join Fighting France, in exchange for a suspension of Fighting French recruiting in the United States. The Admiral had repeated this suggestion previously on March 16, because General de Gaulle's letter of March 13 (in which he "welshed" on his agreement with Admiral Stark) indicated he either had not understood or had not taken into account that suggestion.[39]

The negotiations appeared to have stalled at this point. Then the JAMAIQUE incident unmistakably showed the perils of continuing the issue unresolved. However, before examining that incident, it would be wise to describe how the British dealt with the recruiting problem, particularly as to men who wished to transfer from Fighting French forces to those of General Giraud. Kittredge suggested to Admiral Stark on March 24 that Matthews might take this question up

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39. Stark to de Gaulle, March 26, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

with the Foreign Office.[40] The Admiral agreed and Kittredge informed Matthews of British procedures in this respect.

Action, or tolerance, automatically favoring recruiting by Fighting French forces characterized British procedures in dealing with seamen from North African French ships in United Kingdom ports. Despite the policy decided upon on February 20, after Lord Halifax' representations, direct or personal solicitation was tolerated, if not encouraged. Ensign Chauvin, a French officer in charge of the gun crew on the merchant ship CHAMPOLLION, complained that immigration, police and British naval officials not only made no effort to prevent men from leaving the ship, but even helped them to do so.[41]

Kittredge supplied details. Men were allowed to leave their ships without leave cards or permits. When men were detained on board their ships by their officers, the British authorities at times had the men released and turned over to the Fighting French authorities. Admiral Auboyneau refused to suspend enrollment of seamen from French North African ships or to prohibit solicitation or recruiting propaganda. This refusal was of particular concern to the Admiralty and to the RAF, because at that time 200 French officers and men from North Africa were in England for training. The Admiralty and

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40. Kittredge memorandum, March 24, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

41. Kittredge memorandum, March 26, 1943, Box 207, File: Recruiting, COMNAVEU files.

the RAF were attempting to prevent Fighting French contact with these men.

Frequent reports were received that men in the Fighting French forces who wished to join the North African forces had been dealt with severely by their own officers with the knowledge of the British liaison officers. Several men who had either been imprisoned themselves or who had comrades who had been imprisoned, called at Admiral Stark's Headquarters to report about a dozen cases. The Fighting French imprisoned men who had expressed a desire to serve under Giraud in the North African forces and on various other pretexts at Camberly and at naval detention camps near Dundee and Portsmouth.

Several officers formerly in Fighting French services (Admiral Émile-Henri Muselier, a Captain Moret, Commander Heron de Villefosse, and a Commander Bedin) offered their services to General Giraud, but the British authorities refused to transmit their offers of service. As a rule the British would not permit the French to leave England for North Africa to join Giraud's forces, unless specific requests were made, normally through the American Staffs. Several aviators in the Fighting French services asked for United States assistance in transferring to the North African French services. The requests submitted to their superiors had been torn up and they feared being sent to Brazzaville for punishment which could not be imposed

in England without British approval of sentences of courts-martial.[42]

Any Frenchman who joined British or American services without the express permission of General de Gaulle was looked on by the Gaullists as a traitor to France. For this reason many French agents with the British secret services were in constant danger from the Fighting French services. Some agents had received British passports for legal protection.

The attitude of the French National Committee was that the only legitimate French forces in the war against the Axis were those of Fighting France. Hence, it was only a patriotic duty to enlist men from other French services and conversely to punish men who wished to join other French or Allied services. While the British knew of this attitude, they may not have approved of it, but at least they tolerated many of the acts by which it was expressed.

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42. Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

THE JAMAIQUE INCIDENT

The JAMAIQUE incident may have lasted only five days, from Saturday, March 27 to shortly after midnight on Thursday, April 1, 1943, but it created quite a stir. Soustelle, the Gaullist chronicler, compared the sensation it created to that which would be expected by raising the swastika in Scotland.[1] At root was the issue of who had the right to control the crew of this North African French ship. The three elements to this incident were played out in the Clyde, where JAMAIQUE had put in for repairs before sailing in convoy, and in London, where American, British and French authorities negotiated and maneuvered. The first element was an attempt by the Fighting French to enroll virtually the entire ship's company of JAMAIQUE and thus present the Allies with a fait accompli. The second element was firmness and dispatch on the part of Admiral Stark and the third was British cooperation, or lack of it. The main American worry was that the ship would not sail in convoy as scheduled.

JAMAIQUE, a French merchant ship, was chartered on February 12, 1943, to Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces in North Africa, under

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1. Soustelle, Jacques, Envers et contre tout, (2 vols. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1950), vol. 2, p. 219.

the terms of an agreement concluded with the North African authorities on December 12, 1942. The agreement provided for the use by Allied forces of French ships in North and West African ports. According to the charter party, JAMAIQUE was to remain in the service of the Allied Powers until six months after cessation of hostilities with Germany. During this period, it was to be "at the absolute disposal and under the complete control" of the Allied Commander-in-Chief. Provision was made for it to "remain under and fly the flag of France."[2]

Since JAMAIQUE was chartered for service in the war to defeat Germany and Italy, the charterer arranged for the War Shipping Administration to operate it in his behalf. Further arrangements were made with the Director of the French North African Merchant Marine Office to employ the master, officers and crew named by the French North African authorities. The WSA as operator reserved authority to make any necessary personnel changes. If changes were necessary, French North African authorities would be consulted. Only in an emergency would non-French personnel be employed. "No such changes in personnel will have the effect of modifying the French character of the vessels...all of which... will fly the flag of France." These reasons were sufficient for the United States to oppose any other party attempting to exercise control over the merchant ships in question.

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2. Enclosure (A) to Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe (Stark) (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU) letter serial 0098, April 4, 1943, to Vice Chief of Naval Operations (Horne).

Indeed, the United States' contractual obligations would admit of no other course of action.

Even before JAMAIQUE left North Africa, Colonel Billotte of General de Gaulle's staff told Commander Kittredge the French National Committee knew there were many Gaullists among the crew. Both the American and British authorities knew that when Admiral Auboyneau, Commander of the Free French Navy, learned the ship was bound for Gourock in the Clyde, he gave orders to Lieutenant-Commander Langlais, the Commander of the Fighting French Naval Base at Greenock, to arrange for the enrollment of members of JAMAIQUE's crew.[3] The source of this knowledge was not clear, but there was no reason to doubt that Langlais acted at the instigation of Admiral Auboyneau. Whether the Admiral directed it or was surprised by the zeal with which Langlais subsequently acted is also unclear.

JAMAIQUE arrived at Gourock for repairs and refitting on March 18. During the weeks that followed, members of the crew met Fighting French officials in Glasgow and other places on their own initiative, according to Admiral Auboyneau. Arrangements were made for their enrollment in the Fighting French services. However, Mr. Smeyers and Commandant Vullemin, representatives of the French Merchant Marine, in their contacts with crew members, urged them to remain on board, at least until the return to North Africa. At this time no

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3. Ibid.

attempts were made to prevent the men from joining the French Seamen's Union or from enrolling in the French Merchant Marine. The master of the ship had no doubt that the ship would sail as scheduled on March 31.[4]

Langlais maintained contact with Gaullist sympathizers in the JAMAIQUE crew through Francois Kerdoncuff, the First Radio Officer, and the ship's doctor, Henri Dumetz. He visited the ship on Friday, March 26 at the invitation of Second Captain (First Mate) Yves de Coatpont. At that time he enrolled in the Fighting French forces 142 of the 147 officers and men on board, and urged hoisting the Cross of Lorraine pennant. After Langlais left the ship, the crew demanded the hoisting at the main of the Cross of Lorraine. They declared their intention to obey in future only the orders of the French National Committee.

The following morning, Saturday, March 27, at 9:15 the Captain, Henri Le Boles, reported the incident to Commander Charles Hersum, USNR, the U.S. Naval Liaison Officer on the Clyde. He was concerned lest his ship be delayed in sailing as a result of the attempted transfer of authority over the crew to the French National Committee. Commander Hersum telephoned a full report at 9:45 to Admiral Stark's headquarters in London.

The seriousness of the state of affairs on board JAMAIQUE was

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4. Ibid.

sufficient to alarm Hersum, particularly because it arose against a background of previous difficulties faced by the British in the Clyde area. He had more than a reasonable fear that the Fighting French naval representatives might persuade the crew to leave the ship or to create other troubles that would prevent the ship from sailing as scheduled. At this time all the indications were that serious trouble was brewing. The JAMAIQUE incident had begun.

Langlais delivered a message from General de Gaulle to the crew of JAMAIQUE. The General thanked them for their patriotism and insisted the Cross of Lorraine must be hoisted over the ship. He said the crew would receive his orders at once.[5]

Captain Le Boles sent a copy to Commander Hersum on March 27. The date of delivery of this letter as well as its contents are sufficient evidence to show that General de Gaulle deliberately precipitated this incident and that he had control of its intensity and duration. This conclusion is consistent with the repeated statements of Admiral Auboyneau and other Fighting French officials that the ship would sail as scheduled.

After receiving Hersum's report at 9:45, Admiral Stark decided to place an armed guard on board JAMAIQUE to prevent the crew from leaving the ship. However, before actually ordering the armed gangway watch to board the ship, he requested an immediate conference

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5. Enclosure (B) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

with British officials in an attempt to eonsolidate support for his position and contemplated aetion. Throughout the ineident Admiral Stark refused to acknowledge that the Fighting Freneh had any right whatsoever to attempt to control or to exercise any authority over the ship, its offieers or crew. At all times he made it elear he was primarily concerned with the operation of the ship and its sailing as seheduled. Hence, the armed guard was necessary to ensure the presence of the crew on board.

Pursuant to the Admiral's request a conferenee eonvened at the Admiralty at 10:30 that same morning. Persons present ineluded Commander Kittredge, Charles Peake, a representative of the Ministry of War Transport and the legal scholar, C.H.M. Waldock, of "M" Braneh, the Admiralty. Kittredge informed the British representatives of the orders Admiral Stark proposed to issue. The British officials suggested the WSA reconsider its refusal to request General de Gaulle not to intervene to ask the erew to remain at their posts. This suggestion was subsequently rejected as inconsistent with the Ameriean position, after it had been eommunieated to Kerr of the WSA and Matthews at the Embassy.[6]

At the conelusion of the eonferenee, Kittredge returned to Headquarters. Admiral Stark then instrueted Commander Hersum by

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6. Kittredge memorandum, "Recruiting of Seamen," Box 207, File: Reeruiting, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe. files (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU files), Naval History Division, Offiee of the Chief of Naval Operations.

telephone at 11:25 to continue discussions with the Master and crew; to request British assistance in preventing Langlais or others from inciting the men to make additional demands or to leave the ship; and finally, to place an armed gangway watch on the ship to prevent unauthorized entries or departures. In addition, Admiral Stark directed continuing the discussions with the Foreign Office, Admiralty, Ministry of War Transport and Fighting French officials so JAMAIQUE could sail as scheduled.[7] The decision to place an armed gangway watch on board JAMAIQUE was not communicated to the French in advance as it was to the British.

Pursuant to Admiral Stark's instructions, Kittredge called on Colonel Billotte, Chief of Staff to General de Gaulle, and on Admiral Auboyneau's Flag Lieutenant at noon to protest formally against the acts of the Fighting French representatives to exercise authority over the officers and crew of JAMAIQUE and to request their immediate cessation. Billotte promised to consult General de Gaulle as to measures the Fighting French might take to ensure the departure of the vessel on time with a full complement on board. He told Kittredge he thought the National Committee would do everything in its power to assure the sailing of the ship on time.[8]

American, British and French officials met that afternoon. The

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7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

British stated that at 12:30 their Admiral Hill, Flag Officer in Command, the Clyde, had been informed by telephone of steps being taken by the United States authorities. He had been instructed to coordinate measures of support with local United States representatives, particularly to prevent Langlais from provoking further trouble. The Foreign Office had arranged for their diplomatic and naval liaison officers (Charles Peake and Commander Pinks, RNVR respectively) to the French National Committee to inform their counterparts, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Massigli, and Admiral Auboyneau, of British support for Admiral Stark. A request for the removal of Langlais from the Clyde was anticipated.

Colonel Billotte was requested to insure Langlais would be ordered to cease his activities with respect to the JAMAIQUE crew. His removal from the Clyde was suggested. Billotte promised only to consult General de Gaulle as to measures the Fighting French might take to insure the sailing of the ship on time with a full complement. He promised nothing in regard to Langlais. He claimed that 140 of 147 men on board were Gaullist sympathizers and wished to have the Cross of Lorraine pennant hoisted as moral satisfaction.

Matthews and Kerr felt it unnecessary to appeal to the crew to remain on board, since the armed gangway watch ordered by Admiral Stark would be effective. They also rejected a suggestion that the Cross of Lorraine be flown as a "house flag" since it might violate the terms of the charter. At least the British and French officials promised to

keep Admiral Stark in London and Commander Hersum in Greenock informed.[9]

Shortly before this conference was held in London, British naval security officers, the U.S. Naval Liaison officer, WSA representatives, Captain Le Boles, and Lieutenant-Commander Langlais met in Greenock. Apparently agreement was reached that no activities should be continued that would interfere with the sailing of the ship, and that the Cross of Lorraine should not be hoisted. Langlais was the only one who subsequently denied any agreement. He called Captain Le Boles a liar in his letter of March 29.[10]

By now the French were specifically committed to the sailing of JAMAIQUE on schedule. Indeed, much could be lost, politically speaking, by delaying the ship as a result of a quarrel over the right to control the crew. Even so, the French still had room to maneuver to demonstrate they could control the crew. They proved their control by the raising of the Cross of Lorraine over the ship.

Later that afternoon, Captain Le Boles happened upon a number of the crew. First Radio Officer Kerdoncuff was in a state of great agitation and declared he was going to hoist the Cross of Lorraine pennant. The Captain ordered him not to do so, saying that he was in agreement with the British and American authorities that only the

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9. Enclosure (F) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

10. Enclosure (R) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

Tricolor should be flown on the ship. Kerdoncuff disregarded the Captain's orders and a few minutes later the Cross of Lorraine was flying over the ship. The Captain did not haul down this unauthorized pennant because he wished to avoid the trouble that would surely follow if he attempted to do so. However, he protested vigorously to Langlais this weakening of his authority. Furthermore, Kerdoncuff was reported to have declared the intention of the 142 crew members to obey in future only the orders of the French National Committee.[11]

The hoisting of the Cross of Lorraine meant that the Fighting French had established some control over the crew and to that extent over the ship itself. This control was achieved over the specific objections and contrary to the specific order of the Captain. It was achieved at the expense of the United States by showing the inability of the Captain and of the American authorities to exercise control over the ship.

Kittredge met with Colonel Billotte, André Dielthelm, National Commissioner for Economic Affairs, Finance and the Merchant Marine, and members of Admiral Auboyneau's staff a few moments after the Cross of Lorraine was raised on JAMAIQUE, but before the news reached London. These and other representatives of the French National Committee sought to have Admiral Stark request General de Gaulle and the French National Committee to arrange for the ship's departure on schedule. They made it clear that such a request would be construed

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11. Enclosure (C) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

as a recognition of their right to control the ship and crew. Admiral Stark refused to accede to such a request, even after it was repeated at noon the next day.

The French officials questioned the right of the United States authorities to operate the ship on grounds that the North African administration exceeded its authority by issuing charters illegally and had conscripted the crews. Thus upon arrival in United States or United Kingdom ports, they maintained, the crews had exercised their rights as Free Frenchmen to seek enrollment in Fighting France and to place themselves under General de Gaulle and the French National Committee. Fighting France was the only legitimate French authority. The majority of the French population, the Governments of the European Allied Nations and the British Government recognized them as the leaders of the French resistance to Germany. It was the sacred duty of the French National Committee to protect the national interests and to intervene in cases such as JAMAIQUE. General de Gaulle and the National Committee were prepared to accept full responsibility for officers and crewmen wishing to join Fighting France. Once control of the ship was established, the National Committee would guarantee no delay in sailing. They were aware of the potential harm of a disruption of shipping.

In the case of JAMAIQUE, they declared the action of the crew was spontaneous. While they could not refuse volunteers, their representatives on the Clyde (Smeyers, Vullimin and Langlais) had

done all they could to persuade the men to remain on the ship. Langlais had visited the ship only when invited. He did not speak to the crew, incite them to pose unreasonable conditions or induce them to leave the ship. They maintained the crew had a right to the respect of their wishes and French National interests under the Cross of Lorraine and the control of the French National Committee. They restated their offer. If competent United States authorities so requested, the National Committee would order the crew to remain on board as a unit of the French Merchant Marine, placed at the disposal of the United States as a part of the French war effort.

Kittredge informed the French representatives, among other things, that the officers and men appeared willing to continue with their service. He emphasized that if further disturbances occurred or if the sailing were to be delayed, it could be only on orders of General de Gaulle. [12]

Early that evening one military police officer and a detail of six enlisted United States Military Police boarded JAMAIQUE and established the armed gangway watch. They were cordially received on board. Subsequently reports from the officer, who was the Assistant Provost Marshal on the Clyde, referred to harmonious relations with the officers and crew, and similar relations among ship's company. [13]

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12. Enclosures (A), (B), (L), (M), (N), to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

13. Enclosure (R), to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

In a personal message to General Eisenhower late on March 27, Admiral Stark noted that early agreement between Generals Catroux and Giraud on recruiting procedures would prevent a repetition of recent incidents, and that the British Government had asked Macmillan to urge upon the Generals the necessity of early agreement. General Eisenhower was informed that General de Gaulle had agreed to instruct General Catroux to give first priority to this question. General de Gaulle also expressed the intention of instructing General Catroux to discuss the possibility of some transfers between Fighting French and North African French forces. The JAMAIQUE incident was cited as an illustration of the importance of the earliest possible agreement.[14]

Inspection of JAMAIQUE on Sunday, March 28, showed that the repairs and refitting work were progressing satisfactorily. They continued to do so until the ship sailed. The Cross of Lorraine was flying at the mainmast and the Tricolor was displayed at the tafrail.[15]

Although there were no new developments on Sunday, Hersum kept in touch with Captain Le Boles and British officials. The Captain felt that if the Cross of Lorraine were removed either by him or by the United States authorities, it might lead to such serious consequences that the ship might be prevented from sailing. He indicated tacit approval of the display of the Gaullist insigne, but he felt strongly that

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14. COMNAVEU message 271516Z March 1943.

15. Enclosure (B) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

his authority had been challenged, which he resented. He also felt that if the ship sailed as scheduled, the officers and crew would obey his orders. He stated that prior to departure the Cross of Lorraine would be lowered and the Tricolor alone would fly.

Both the Captain and Commander Hersum were apprehensive of a raid at the last minute on the crew prior to sailing, not only in view of recent events, but also because of Langlais' past performance in cases of British controlled ships of similar origin. Indeed, British security officials thought him a "slippery individual" and recommended keeping a careful watch on him.[16]

Meanwhile, Captain Le Boles had received a letter from the crew signed by 16 men, which protested the presence of a foreign armed guard aboard a French vessel under a French flag in violation of international law. It was an insult to the French flag and to the honor of the officers and men aboard. The Captain was reminded he had sufficient qualified officers and men on board to man his own gangway watch. The letter contained a profession of obedience to the orders of General de Gaulle and the French National Committee.[17]

The author of the letter was never identified, but it is by no means unreasonable to suspect that Langlais knew of the letter, if he did not write it. Certainly, two of the ships officers, Kerdoncuff and Dr. Dumetz,

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16. U.S. Naval Liaison Officer, The Clyde (Hersum) to Stark, March 29, 1943 part of Enclosure (C) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

17. Enclosure (R) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

were instrumental in its drafting. The point is that this letter was an admission of mutinous intent, if not mutiny. Following the flag raising incident, it was indicative of at least a temporary suspension of the authority of the Captain over his ship. Here, the Fighting French conspired to foment mutiny. The problem the mutiny posed for the Captain and for the American authorities was to make certain it would not succeed. If it did, the Fighting French would have established at the very least their ability to control the crew.

Admiral Auboyneau assured Kittredge the next day, March 29, not only that the ship would sail on schedule, but also that there never was any question, except in the American minds, of the ship not sailing on time. For this reason, there was no justification either for taking any special measures, or for basing Admiralty and Foreign Office decisions on what he called unverified reports. He claimed to have written reports from his representatives flatly contradicting Hersum's telephoned report.[18] He produced no evidence to support his claim, which can only be viewed as an uncorroborated assertion.

The worst fears of Admiral Stark and of Captain Le Boles that a last minute raid on the crew or even earlier defections would prevent JAMAIQUE from sailing on schedule were in fact groundless. But they were reasonably justified in the premises. The French National Committee was playing a subtle game. By demonstrating their ability

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18. Enclosure (L) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

to control the crew to the technical point of mutiny, they sought to induce Admiral Stark to request or to make arrangements with the French National Committee for future conditions of service of the 140 odd men from JAMAIQUE who had joined or wished to join the Gaullist forces. Admiral Auboyneau was quite clear on this point in his conversation with Kittredge.

Admiral Auboyneau pointed out to Kittredge that the Fighting French had not urged the crew to leave the ship, but rather they had endeavored to persuade them to remain on board. There had been no disturbances on board and, if any developed, he said, it would be entirely due to the action of the United States authorities by placing the armed gangway watch on board. He averred that Admiral Hill did not agree with Hersum's reports and strongly disapproved of the action taken by Admiral Stark.[19]

By way of reply, Kittredge described the United States position. JAMAIQUE was operated by a United States Government agency at the request of the charterer, the Allied Commander-in-Chief in Africa. The crew were prepared to sail unless ordered not to do so by General de Gaulle or his representatives. It seemed unnecessary for General de Gaulle to issue any orders at all, and for this reason Admiral Stark

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19. No communications were found in the COMNAVEU files to prove or to disprove this assertion. There was not even a hint of British disapproval of Admiral Stark's actions. Admiral Hill may very well have held such opinions, but if he communicated them to the Admiralty, the Admiralty did not convey them to COMNAVEU.

was not disposed to make any request. Hence if the ship did not sail, it would be known that this was due to orders from the Fighting French.[20]

Admiral Stark made it quite clear that he had no intention whatsoever of recognizing any right of the French National Committee to exercise control over anything whatever to do with JAMAIQUE. Since the National Committee were unwilling to delay the sailing of the ship, time was on the side of Admiral Stark and Captain Le Boles. Their best course of action was firmness and restraint, which they pursued steadfastly and well.

The National Committee formally protested the establishment of the armed gangway watch on March 29. The protest claimed the armed gangway watch was a measure which did injury to the personal dignity and patriotism of French sailors and was of a nature to provoke the most regrettable incidents.[21]

Admiral Stark rejected it on April 1. He was unable to understand or to accept a protest against military measures taken in the discharge of the task confided to authorities of the United States Government by the Commander-in-Chief of an Allied Force. He pointed out that such measures were normally applied to all American owned or operated vessels engaged in the ocean transport of war materials, in order to assure such transport efficiently and without delay. The action taken

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20. Enclosure (L) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

21. Enclosure (O) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

in this instance was in keeping with that routine.[22]

Although General de Gaulle was unable to maneuver Admiral Stark into requesting him to order the crew to sail on schedule, he was able to instigate a military-religious ceremony on board, presumably for the symbolic purpose of demonstrating patriotic and Gaullist fervor. Early Tuesday morning, March 30, Hersum telephoned Admiral Stark's headquarters to say that at 11:00 that same morning a Fighting French naval Chaplain would say mass on board JAMAIQUE and would bless the Cross of Lorraine. A Fighting French naval guard of honor would be in attendance. He also reported a statement by Langlais that General de Gaulle had ordered the Cross of Lorraine to be flown over JAMAIQUE.

Both the First Officer and the Captain asked 1st Lt. Van Vechtin, C.M.P., officer in charge of the armed gangway watch, if he had any objection to the presence on board of the chaplain and Guard of Honor. Van Vechtin replied that his orders were to permit anyone vouched for by the Captain to board or to leave the ship. The Captain then commented that there might be trouble if the party came on board, but there would probably be more if an attempt were made to exclude them.[23]

Prior to holding the ceremony, Langlais called on British and American authorities on the Clyde (Admiral Hill and Commander Hersum) to obtain their consent, in addition to that of Captain Le Boles.

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22. Enclosure (U) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

23. Enclosure (R) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

Even so, shortly before the ceremony, American officials requested and obtained the assistance of the British Immigration Authorities to permit none of the crew to leave the ship and also the cooperation of British Security Officers. They sent a party to the dock to enforce the wishes of the Captain of the ship if he objected to the planned ceremony.[24]

These precautions happily proved to be unnecessary. The ceremony went off without incident. The ceremonial party consisted of one Captain of the French Marines, one naval Chaplain, one NCO and seven enlisted men armed with carbines. On boarding the ship all appropriate salutes were rendered and the authority of the United States was recognized.

Following the ceremony in the ship's main saloon, the Cross of Lorraine was hoisted on the mainmast, while the Tricolor continued to fly at the tafrail. Relations among the officers and crew, the boarding party and the American gangway watch were described as so harmonious that a general and cordial invitation was extended to the Americans to participate in drinks and lunch following the flag consecration ceremony. Tension relaxed to the extent that during the ensuing luncheon the British Security Unit departed.[25]

The Admiralty Office in Glasgow reported in the late afternoon of March 30 that the Fighting French Naval authorities in anticipation of the withdrawal of the United States armed gangway watch were making

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24. Enclosures (B) and (T) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

25. Ibid.

preparations to place their own armed guard on board. The British refused to sanction this step. They specifically requested the retention of the American armed guard, which remained on board.[26]

The armed guard turned back several members of the crew who wished to go ashore. These men protested and 1st Lt. Van Vechtin spoke to the First Officer who said to make no exceptions and to keep the men on board. One of the men then went to Captain Le Boles who gave permission to the man and his shipmates to go ashore, because of the following letter from Langlais.[27] The Captain had the letter posted at the gangway:

> Order of General de Gaulle.
>
> General de Gaulle has personally examined the present situation of the French ship JAMAIQUE and of its crew.
>
> It goes without saying that this crew which belongs to Fighting France, may receive orders only from the French National Committee.
>
> Taking into account the interest of France in the war, General de Gaulle has directed that the JAMAIQUE should complete the voyage arranged.
>
> He salutes the ship which is going to take the sea for the first time under the emblem of the Lorraine Cross.
>
> s/ Langlais[28]

To take this letter as a capitulation by de Gaulle would be to read too much into it, but it was certainly a strategic retreat onto high ground.

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26. Enclosure (B) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

27. Enclosure (A) to COMNAVEU letter serial 00127, April 17, 1943.

28. Enclosure (S) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

Once he found that he was unable to move Admiral Stark to request him to order the crew to sail with the ship as scheduled, General de Gaulle was faced with the necessity of insuring the departure of the ship was not delayed because of acts of the Fighting French. In this way he could avoid the onus of interfering with the war effort.

The next day, March 31, all reports received by the U. S. Naval Liaison Officer and the British Shipping Control office indicated that JAMAIQUE would sail that night on schedule. At 10:30 the ship anchored in the stream preparatory to sailing. Five hours later the American gangway watch was removed, and afterwards the Cross of Lorraine was no longer flying at the mainmast, but on the radio mast. Captain Le Boles informed the U. S. Navy boarding officer that it would be removed when the ship got underway. Shortly after midnight, JAMAIQUE reached the convoy rendezvous point and by 3:30 the next morning had sailed in convoy as scheduled.[29]

The Fighting French did succeed, however, in removing two officers from the ship. These men were reassigned to corvettes. Captain Le Boles thought they had been removed in an attempt to cripple the ship. Determined that his ship would sail as scheduled, the Captain sailed almost single-handedly from the Clyde. Only two other officers were aboard, both of whom were very junior. Upon reaching New York, he told the boarding officer he had not been out of his clothes

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29. Enclosure (B) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

for 20 days.[30]

Although JAMAIQUE sailed in convoy on schedule, it took several days for the dust to settle. Referring to what he called unwarranted interference with the control and operation of the ship, Admiral Stark presented General de Gaulle with a bill of particulars:

(1) the enrollment of men of the JAMAIQUE in the Fighting French forces;

(2) visits by Fighting French Naval Officers not authorized by United States authorities;

(3) the issuance of a series of verbal and written orders, not only to the Captain, but to members of the crew, either during these visits or to personnel of the ship while ashore;

(4) the hoisting of a pennant on the vessel symbolizing some control other than that of the Tricolor, the Flag of France (which alone was authorized), contrary to the orders and inspite of the written protest of the Captain;

(5) the boarding of the ship by an armed detachment of Fighting French forces;

(6) the holding of a ceremony apparently designed to symbolize an unauthorized transference of authority over the crew or the ship or both;

(7) intimidation of the Captain and officers;

(8) disregard of requests that such interference with the crew of the vessel be forbidden;

(9) issuance of formal orders, in General de Gaulle's name, by Langlais on matters directly affecting the operation of the ship, as follows: on March 21

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30. District Intelligence Officer, Third Naval District (New York), letter April 20, 1943, File: A8-2/EF28, in Chief of Naval Operation files.

> accepting the enrollment of the crew and instructing them to wait further orders; on March 30 instructing them to remain on the ship, but to accept orders from no authority other than the French National Committee.

The U.S. Navy regarded such activities as inimical to the war effort. He observed that without the attempts of Langlais to assert an authority over the ship which neither the United States Government nor the Allied Commander-in-Chief in North Africa would recognize, there would have been no need for General de Gaulle's order to the crew to sail with the ship.[31]

Interestingly enough, General de Gaulle apparently never replied to this letter. But on April 7, Massigli presented the French view of the events of the JAMAIQUE incident. His view did not accord in all respects with the information on hand, according to Kittredge. Unfortunately this document is not on file in the U.S. Navy records.

The First Lord of the Admiralty was advised of the Navy Department's policy of viewing control of shipping as an operational rather than a political matter. Since other vessels in a similar category were expected in United Kingdom ports in the near future, Admiral Stark said he would appreciate it if measures could be taken to prevent interference by the Fighting French.[32]

This request was significant because at no time did there appear

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31. Enclosure (Z) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

32. Enclosure (Y) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

to be any British restraint on Langlais.

Admiral King was informed that JAMAIQUE had sailed as scheduled.[33] Admiral Stark stated that he handled the matter as an operational rather than a political question, even before receipt of orders from Admiral King to do so.[34] Washington was officially notified that Admiral Stark had ordered the armed guard to board JAMAIQUE to prevent the "proselytizing interference" of Langlais. Beyond saying he pressed the Admiralty to take positive action there was no further criticism of the Admiralty action or lack of it, not even an expression of regret or disappointment by Admiral Stark at the lack of Admiralty action.

General Eisenhower, legally the charterer of the ship, was informed of its sailing and of the incidents preceding the sailing. Admiral Stark assured him that at no time did he recognize any right whatsoever of the French National Committee to control the ship. He said he was prepared to place an American crew on board, if necessary, and he received authority from Admiral King to do so.[35]

Admiral Stark told General Eisenhower of General de Gaulle's repeated assurance that he wished to avoid any interference with the war effort, and his insistence on the right to accept volunteers. The

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33. COMNAVEU message 011701Z April 1943.

34. Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet (COMINCH) message 311827Z March 1943.

35. COMNAVEU message 011702Z April 1943.

Admiral felt the embarrassing recruiting incidents, then occurring frequently in United States and United Kingdom ports, might be avoided by a joint de Gaulle - Giraud statement inviting Frenchmen to remain in their present services pending formation of a joint military and naval organization. Such a statement would be accompanied by an Anglo-American guarantee that men might transfer to other services.[36]

One thing is clear from this incident: so long as General de Gaulle was unwilling to delay the sailing of the ship for whatever reason, there was no need for Admiral Stark to accede to the French suggestion that he request French assistance in getting the ship underway on time. The French role, then, was confined to the generation of political pressure to induce Admiral Stark to make the request.

The French attempts to gain control of at least the JAMAIQUE crew, if not the entire ship, were not based on petty motives. They were based on a specific perception of United States policy. The Fighting French were convinced that the United States was engaged in a deliberate campaign to discredit General de Gaulle and the National Committee in the eyes of American, British and continental opinion.

This theory was derived from the American refusal to recognize General de Gaulle as the representative of French interests, even to the extent that he was recognized by the British. American dealings with General Giraud pursuant to the Anfa Agreement, American

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36. Enclosure (AA) to COMNAVEU letter, April 4, 1943.

refusal to transport the Gaullist representative to Guiana while expediting the transportation of General Giraud's man, American objection to Fighting French recruiting of seamen -- all these and other Gaullist frustrations were seen as evidence supporting the Fighting French theory.

Holding to this theory or perception, the French National Committee felt it was fighting for its very existence and for the ideals upon which it was based. The JAMAIQUE incident was seen as a test case as to whether the United States could persuade or induce the British to abandon General de Gaulle and Fighting France. The National Committee sought to establish the right to represent the Gaullist members of the crew. With this point won, they reasoned, liberal opinion in the United States and elsewhere, coupled with events in North Africa, would force the United States to recognize the National Committee as representing French interests and participation in the war.[37] JAMAIQUE, then, was seen as an important stepping stone to obtaining American recognition.

The National Committee even went to the extent of consulting several United Nations governments, including the Soviet Ambassador in London, before General de Gaulle protested to Admiral Stark. The French believed they had the support of the Soviet and exiled Governments. They sought to use JAMAIQUE during the Giraud-Catroux

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37. Kittredge memorandum, March 30, 1943, Box 204, File: March 1943, COMNAVEU files.

negotiations, then underway in Algiers, to determine whether the United States could destroy the influence of the National Committee or whether the United States could be forced to recognize the legitimacy of the National Committee's authority.[38] Admiral Stark's firmness and the sailing of the ship as scheduled disappointed the French in their efforts to force American recognition.

While the Admiralty cooperated with Admiral Stark to a limited extent, the prevailing view was that this affair was purely political and that it could be dealt with between the French and American authorities. The British position sharply diverged from the American position which was that the question was strictly operational. Had the British position coincided with the American one, Admiral Hill could have been given authority to take positive action, such as restraint of Langlais, rather than the insipid injunction not to encourage his activities. Also, Admiral Auboyneau could have been summoned to the Admiralty and told quite plainly that such activities must cease forthwith. The failure of the British to take positive action undoubtedly left an impression that they were not cooperating with the Americans.

The apparent lack of British cooperation was not derived from any conscious attempt or desire to hinder the Americans. Rather, British policy was based on the relationship established with General de Gaulle in the summer of 1940 and on the policies and habits that

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38. Ibid.

subsequently developed. To the British the Fighting French represented French action in the war against the Axis. For this reason the British tended to support General de Gaulle and his followers. The North African French were viewed at best as repentant Vichy French, who after accepting the armistice, became neutral, if not active collaborators with the German military effort.

The United States did not have this early association with General de Gaulle. It was American policy to deal with local authorities, whoever they might be, as men on the spot. It was a policy of expedience, based on military considerations. It left the resolution of political questions to the post-war period. Since the number of troops and ships under General Giraud in North Africa exceeded those under General de Gaulle, proportionally more support was given to the North African French than to the Fighting French under lend-lease.[39]

For these reasons, it is not surprising that in a specific instance, such as the JAMAIQUE incident, the British response would differ from the American response. British cooperation was more passive than active. They took measures to prevent ill-considered action by the French authorities which would reveal the very deep divergencies of American and British policy. Despite these differences the British did not oppose or even caution Admiral Stark concerning the steps he took. However, the Admiralty was concerned with the legal questions

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39. Kittredge memorandum, April 30, 1943, Box 204, File: April 1943, COMNAVEU files.

involved.

Discussions with Admiralty officials brought to light a serious legal problem. C. H. M. Waldock, the legal scholar, noted that if the question of the status of North African French ships and their crews were raised in a British court, the result might be embarrassing. There was no basis for recognition by English courts of (1) the powers and functions of an Allied Commander-in-Chief; (2) the military character of services performed for an Allied force by agencies of a foreign government; and (3) the legality of the North African Administration.

By successfully attacking the legal bases of the charter under which JAMAIQUE was operated the Fighting French might possibly obtain writs of habeas corpus. The British would then be obliged to board North African French ships to remove any men wishing to join Fighting France, if they were prevented from going ashore to do so. Waldock also pointed out that if the legality of the North African French regime were questioned, the Fighting French might obtain custody, if not title, to North African French ships entering British ports. Under British law, even though such ships were operated by agencies of the United States Government under the authority of an Allied Commander-in-Chief, they would probably be regarded as French merchant ships, engaged in commercial traffic.[40]

British action or lack of it was based as much on policy

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40. Ibid.

considerations as it was on legal grounds. The Americans sought only to expedite the shipment of goods by sea for military purposes, and for this they required North African French ships. The French were somewhat more desperate, because they were seeking to establish a principle.

The JAMAIQUE incident was a prime example of the need for an agreement between General de Gaulle and General Giraud. Even though this incident soon passed, the question of recruiting continued to plague American and British officials until the creation of the French Committee of National Liberation and the ensuing unification of French forces in early June, 1943.

CHAPTER VIII

AGREEMENT

Recent events had heightened American and British interest in a resolution of the division of the French forces. Although Allied officials were unable as before to effect a unification of the French forces themselves, they continued to exert what influence they could on the course of negotiations as they proceeded towards the desired end. As far as Admiral Stark was concerned, it meant discussions with Fighting French leaders on the progress of the negotiations. These discussions were in the French interest as well, since American approval of the conditions of unification would increase the likelihood of their acceptance by General Giraud.

As the recent crisis of hard feelings was abating, General Catroux arrived in London on April 10 for discussions with the French National Committee on General Giraud's draft proposals which had been sent on ahead. The National Committee discussed them exclusively at its meetings of April 11, 13 and 15.[1] A decision was reached at the final meeting.

At least sixty percent of the provisional agreement between

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1. Soustelle, Jacques, Envers et contre tout, (2 vols., Paris: Robert Laffont, 1950), vol. 2, p. 22.

Generals Giraud and Catroux was immediately acceptable to the National Committee. Only the issue of the separation of civil and military authority produced a substantial difference of opinion. General Giraud felt that the head of any central provisional authority and the military commander of the French armed forces should be the same person. Among others, Massigli, National Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, felt such a merger of authority was contrary to democratic principles. While the National Committee agreed in principle that civil and military authority should be separated, the arrangements by which such separation would be accomplished were the occasion of the debate.

Massigli hoped that the National Committee would leave General Giraud free to choose the position he wanted. General de Gaulle was prepared at that time to subordinate himself to General Giraud to achieve unity, but he was not prepared to leave both civil and military authority in the latters hands.[2] To facilitate agreement, General de Gaulle and the National Committee were prepared to accept the designation of General Catroux to fill either of the two positions which General Giraud did not assume.[3]

In discussing the de Gaulle-Giraud negotiations with Admiral Stark

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2. Ibid.

3. Kittredge memorandum, April 13, 1943, Box 204, File: April 1943, Commander U.S. Naval Forces, Europe files (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU files), Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

on April 12, Massigli expressed his deep concern about finding an acceptable compromise. He was aware of the difficulty of persuading either General de Gaulle or General Giraud to subordinate himself to the other. A way out might be the creation of a council or committee with no permanent chairman, each member presiding in turn. Thus, if General Giraud were to choose the role of military commander, he would be subordinate to the committee or council and not to General de Gaulle. Another possibility might be to make General Catroux chairman, which would conceivably be acceptable to the North African leaders. In that case, General Catroux would exercise general supervision over the Empire.[4]

Under the compromise as conceived by Massigli, and explained to Admiral Stark, General de Gaulle might accept a position as War Commissioner, with the dual task of organizing and equipping the "Secret Army" as well as training and equipping French forces to participate in offensive actions on the continent. Massigli realized that the identification of General de Gaulle with the resistance movement in France was an essential condition to any agreement that might be reached.[5]

These questions were discussed by the National Committee at its meeting on April 13. Apparently only Massigli and Catroux supported

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4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

compromise proposals of any kind. The other members wanted either General Catroux or General de Gaulle to go to Algiers at once to urge General Giraud to agree to the formation of a council or committee to be presided over by General de Gaulle, the members of which would be jointly agreed upon.[6] Both Catroux and Massigli evidently realized that this hard line would be unacceptable to General Giraud and that it would in all probability be counter-productive in reaching an agreement. Their opposition to it was so pronounced that they even made clear, at a luncheon at the Foreign Office on April 14, their intention to resign from the National Committee if their compromise proposals were not accepted.[7]

The principle of a separation of civil and military authority was endorsed by the National Committee. General Catroux was instructed to urge General Giraud to accept this principle, in the belief that the French people, who were profoundly democratic, would neither understand nor approve the establishment of a provisional organization in which supreme civil and military authority were merged in either General Giraud or in General de Gaulle. If General Giraud were to accept this principle, the National Committee would permit him to choose either to remain as commander of the French forces or to become President of the new unified council or committee. If General

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6. Ibid.

7. Tracy B. Kittredge, MSS Diary, April 14, 1943, Box 207, COMNAVEU files.

Giraud preferred to retain his military position, General de Gaulle would expect to head the committee exercizing civil authority. In the event General Giraud chose the military role and also wished to be a member of the new council or committee, Catroux explained to Admiral Stark that he was authorized to suggest that Generals Giraud and de Gaulle become co-presidents of such a body.[8]

This point was the last major question of principle that remained to be resolved between the French in London and in Algiers. In his speech on March 14, General Giraud had subscribed to the two other premises the National Committee insisted upon. The first was that decisions by the French people on the future government after the liberation should not be prejudiced. The second was that any provisional authority should be established as far as possible in accordance with the laws of France and the French constitution and that it should function within the framework of French republican institutions and practices. Thus, if General Giraud accepted the principle of separation of civil and military authority, the remaining questions would be ones of implementation and identity of leadership.

Both Catroux and Massigli attached great importance to obtaining full agreement of American and British authorities to any measure proposed. For this reason, they called on Admiral Stark on April 15 as soon as the National Committee reached its decision. They went

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8. Kittredge memorandum, April 16, 1943, Box 204, File: April 1943, COMNAVEU files.

to great lengths to explain the position of the National Committee to Admiral Stark, as well as elucidating their own personal views as to the possible role that might be assigned to the various French leaders in the new organization.

If General Giraud were to agree to the principles and conditions decided upon by the National Committee, then General Catroux would suggest a meeting with General de Gaulle as soon as possible to work out the details of the new organization, methods of action and the assignment of French leaders to specific positions. It had been agreed that both sides could make suggestions, but the final decisions would be made by Generals de Gaulle and Giraud. Catroux personally felt that if General Giraud gave up his military position, General Juin would make an admirable successor, having demonstrated his loyalty to the Allied cause and his ability to command and to influence French forces in North Africa.

One reason General Catroux went to such lengths to explain to Admiral Stark the position of the National Committee was his wish that Admiral Stark would inform Washington. General Catroux made the point that his chances of success in the forthcoming discussions with General Giraud would be enhanced if Washington did not oppose the suggestions he intended to make. He subtly requested American support by expressing hope that it would be possible to inform General Giraud of the opinion of the American authorities in regard to the proposals for the unification of French action.

Catroux and Massigli sounded a positive note when they emphasized that unity could be achieved only in a spirit of reconciliation in the true spirit of fraternity. Only those who had deliberately destroyed their country or aided the enemy would be excluded. All others would be welcomed to the national effort to revive France to restore her position in the world.

Admiral Stark agreed to report the efforts of the National Committee to Washington, saying he was sure there would be no opposition to any constructive efforts to achieve the unity of French forces so long urged by the President. He was sure that if an expression of their opinion would help, it would be forthcoming.[9] A summary of the conversation was reported to Washington by the Embassy on the basis of information received from Admiral Stark.[10]

Before leaving London for Algiers on April 16, General Catroux explained to Winant and to Eden separately the outline of the proposals he was authorized to make to General Giraud. General de Gaulle made it a point to inform Eden himself that he personally approved the formula Catroux was taking to Algiers and that he was confident of an early agreement. Once again, General de Gaulle stated a desire to visit Algiers to complete the unification of French forces. However, and perhaps

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9. Ibid.

10. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, (6 vols., Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), vol. 2, p. 94.

significantly because it implied a more cautious approach than heretofore, General de Gaulle wanted to go to Algiers only after General Giraud accepted the basic principles proposed. The purpose of the visit then, was to work out the details of unification not to effect it in principle.[11] The statement the National Committee issued on the results of the deliberations only referred to the "importance" of a visit by General de Gaulle to Algiers and did not include the significant proviso the General expressed to Eden.[12]

It was obvious to Winant and to Murphy, as it must have been to Kittredge and Admiral Stark, that General de Gaulle and the National Committee were engaged in the concluding and crucial phase of what can best be described as a power drive to dominate the French war effort, early unification of which was anticipated. The principle of separation of civil and military authority found no doubt sincere and devout adherents among the members of the National Committee, as an essential part of the French democratic and republican tradition. It was also a useful means or tool by which the Fighting French could subvert General Giraud's authority by dividing it. By making General Giraud the nominal head of a unified authority, but also by divesting him of his military authority, the Fighting French thought they could shelve him.

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11. Kittredge Diary, April 16, 1943.

12. De Gaulle, Charles, Unity-Documents, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 143.

General de Gaulle would be made War Commissioner, regardless of whether General Giraud retained his military authority or civil authority in the capacity as President of the unified body. In this position, General de Gaulle would have control over the Secret Army or resistance groups in metropolitan France. The implications for the future course of events were tremendous, because then General de Gaulle would have a decided advantage among the active patriots in France whose support would be necessary when France would be liberated. For this reason, General de Gaulle was prepared to accept a position nominally inferior to that of General Giraud, although he was bitterly opposed to any arrangement whereby General Giraud would in actuality be in the superior position. Hence, the unalterable insistence upon the principle of separation of civil and military authority.

By intimations and statements of Gaullist leaders and officials, it was evident that General de Gaulle was coming out clearly in favor of a provisional government. The position was strongly appealing to the segment of French opinion that sincerely felt France would fare better in the councils of the victors with a provisional government than without one. It also appealed to opportunists who sought places within that government. By endorsing or at least encouraging the concept of a provisional government, the Gaullists were in a stronger position than General Giraud. The Gaullists could allege that General Giraud had the support of the United States in opposing the renaissance of a strong France capable of taking care of its own interests and most decidedly

not subordinate to the Allies. Murphy noted that this trend had been encouraged in North Africa by articles in the press and confusion in the public mind over General Giraud's views, of which there still was considerable support. General de Gaulle exploited this confusion to strengthen his claim that only under his leadership could real French unity be achieved.[13]

General Giraud sought to counter this confusion by publication of his proposals, with an appropriate explanation. It was necessary for General Giraud to reassure public opinion in North Africa and in metropolitan France that he could and would maintain both contact and support with all elements and that the Council would allow their representatives to have a voice in the trusteeship of French affairs. So long as any spirit of loyalty to Vichy pervaded some important French Army and Navy circles, it was also necessary to counteract it by General Giraud demonstrating progress towards unity. Murphy thought that if the United States continued to rearm the North African French Army pursuant to the Anfa agreement, it would help bolster General Giraud. Another step would be the removal of some Vichy-tainted senior officers at the rapidly approaching successful conclusion of the Tunisian campaign.[14]

The reports General Catroux sent General de Gaulle from Algiers

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13. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 96.

14. Ibid.

were more encouraging than any he had previously sent, even though he reported there was still disagreement over some questions. General Giraud protested against the continuing Fighting French recruitment of seamen from North African French ships. This issue was relatively minor in comparison with the question of the relation of civil and military authorities. General Giraud insisted that the head of the civil authority should be the Commander-in-Chief of the military forces. Since the French constitution provided for the President of the Republic to be the Supreme Commander, the head of the civil authority to be formed should at least have nominal command of the military forces. General Catroux pointed out that the head of the state under the constitution was not the active leader of the armed forces and he continued to insist upon the separation of civil and military authority.[15]

What was really encouraging about Catroux' reports was his recommendation that General de Gaulle go to North Africa at once. General Giraud had suggested a site for their meeting in a quiet place away from Algiers and free from distracting influences. The two generals agreed upon Marrakesh.[16] Catroux had reversed his stand of a few weeks before when he advised General de Gaulle to delay his visit to Algiers, presumably because he felt at that time that conditions in North Africa were not ripe for such a visit. But now he expressly

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15. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 154.

16. Ibid., p. 156.

told General de Gaulle that the only way to resolve the outstanding issues was in a personal meeting with General Giraud. When agreement would be reached, the two generals could then return to Algiers.[17]

The reason General Giraud wished to meet with General de Gaulle away from Algiers was exactly the reason General de Gaulle wished to meet there. General de Gaulle hoped that public demonstrations and other indications of physical support for Fighting France would strengthen his hand. Indeed, General de Gaulle's supporters in Algiers were arranging a maximum demonstration on the occasion of his arrival there.[18] He was correct in his apprehensions that while in North Africa he would be in the other camp and to that extent he was probably wise in not wishing to be placed in a relatively obscure spot where additional pressures might be brought to bear, but rather wishing to meet where he deemed his maximum support to exist. Whether such apprehensions were in fact justified under the then current circumstances was a matter of judgment. Catroux thought they were not. General de Gaulle and the National Committee disagreed.

The annoyance and opposition Catroux' suggestion of a meeting place aroused at Carlton Gardens, the Fighting French headquarters, was sufficient to send Massigli on April 29 to Eden to request that

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17. Ibid., p. 157.

18. Kittredge memorandum, April 30, 1943, in "Selected Documents from Correspondence of Admiral Harold R. Stark, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe," (hereinafter referred to as COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, p. 49.

Macmillan suggest to Giraud that the meeting be held in Algiers, since the Fighting French mission in North Africa was there. A similar request was made of Admiral Stark to have Robert Murphy suggest to Giraud that the site of the meeting be changed. Admiral Stark declined to interfere in what he considered to be a question that must be settled among Frenchmen.[19] Ambassador Winant heartily agreed.[20]

The issue that kept the two generals apart was the question of where they would meet. In a speech at Grosvenor House on May 7, General de Gaulle gave General Giraud cause to break off negotiations by severely deprecating the North African regime.[21] This speech was more of a demonstration of frustration and oratorical skill than it was an example of wisdom, tact and diplomacy. It thoroughly disgusted Massigli, who had again confided to Admiral Stark his intention to quit the National Committee if an agreement were not reached with General Giraud. Catroux felt his role as a negotiator had been terminated by General de Gaulle's choice of using the radio to conduct his own negotiations.[22] Churchill, who was in Washington, told Hull the next week that he personally was "utterly disgusted" with General de Gaulle. Admiral Stark was at long last losing patience with the General. He thought a blow torch should be used, if necessary, to help produce

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19. Ibid.

20. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 108.

21. Soustelle, Envers et contre tout, vol. 2, pp. 236-241.

22. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 108.

either an agreement or a definite break, but in any case to end the constant "fiddling and bickering" in one way or the other.[23]

Realizing that he may have gone too far, or at least taking a more diplomatic tack, General de Gaulle wrote a courteous letter on May 6 to General Giraud in which he cogently explained his reasons for wanting to meet in Algiers, as well as other points at issue.[24] The existence of this letter was apparently not known to Admiral Stark and his staff, at least no indication of it was found in the American files. Finally, on May 17, General Giraud agreed to meet General de Gaulle in Algiers at once and he urged the formation of a central "Executive Committee."[25] General Catroux telegraphed the terms of this letter to General de Gaulle on May 18. In his reply to Catroux the next day, the General saw nothing of importance separating him and General Giraud, and recalled him to London immediately. General Catroux departed Algiers on May 20 to return a week later.[26] In the meantime General de Gaulle and the National Committee had accepted General Giraud's proposals and General de Gaulle was at last on his way to Algiers. He arrived on May 30.

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23. Stark to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, May 21, 1943, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, p. 51.

24. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, p. 160.

25. Ibid., p. 166.

26. General Catroux, Dans la bataille de Mediterranée, (Paris: Rene Juillard, 1949), p. 360.

With General de Gaulle's departure from London and the rapid formation of the French Committee of National Liberation, the necessity of a representative in London for consultations on political as opposed to military questions passed. Changing conditions gave rise to new arrangements and the shift of the center of French activity from London to Algiers also shifted the center of discussions.

Admiral Stark and his staff still provided what assistance they could, although in fact they were no longer intimately connected with the political side of relations with the French. Admiral Stark sent Kittredge to North Africa to assist Murphy and General Eisenhower from May 25 to June 14. While in North Africa, Kittredge compiled several thorough and astute reports which he delivered personally to the Secretaries of State and the Navy when he returned to the United States from June 18 to July 30.

Even though it was not until after the Quebec Conference in August 1943 that Admiral Stark was officially relieved of his diplomatic duties which reverted to the Embassy, for all practical purposes the removal of the center of activity to Algiers terminated the diplomatic activities of Admiral Stark in regard to the French.

The creation of the French Committee of National Liberation provided a superficial unity of the French war effort. It did not decide which faction would ultimately triumph. The first few weeks saw stormy meetings and violent controversies, until at last General de Gaulle emerged in the dominant role, a position he had long coveted.

Subsequent behavior and policies of the French can to a great degree be explained by the attitudes and outlooks the Fighting French carried over into the French Committee of National Liberation. For this reason, it is important to examine them as they existed in May 1943.

Admiral Stark realized the usefulness in Washington of as complete an exposition as possible of the attitudes of the Fighting French particularly during Churchill's visit in May 1943. On May 21, he sent to Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, a description of the attitudes of the Fighting French and of the legal and political bases of French unity, which Kittredge prepared. The description was based on conversations held with members of Fighting France, who were not members of the National Committee, except André Philip. Admiral Stark thought it was a good picture of the French situation.[27]

One of the more pronounced features of the Gaullist attitude, Kittredge explained, was its anti-American nature, which was based on what they saw as the American tendency to adopt expedients in the name of a "realist" policy. The Gaullists saw these expedients as consistently being at the expense of France. A current story was that the United States was endeavoring to persuade Italy to leave the war, and possibly to join in the action against Germany, in return for French territories, such as Nice, Savoy, Tunis and Corsica. This story

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27. Stark to Knox, May 21, 1943, Kittredge memorandum, May 21, 1943, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, pp. 53-59.

originated in General de Gaulle's headquarters at Carlton Gardens and was also spread by the de Gaulle mission in Algiers. It was repeated to Admiral Stark by visiting French resistance leaders.[28] The Gaullists evidently found the anti-American line useful to pursue when the negotiations with General Giraud were deadlocked.

The anti-American attitude was by no means held by all the Fighting French, but it was prevalent among the extremist group, who, as distinguished from the moderate group, based it on American support for General Giraud. They saw the Giraud regime in North Africa as a creation by the United States of a third French faction, which was neither Gaullist nor Pétainist. Rather it was a bastard brand of Vichy fascism, willing to cooperate with the Allies so it could join in the spoils of victory, now that it was convinced the Germans would lose the war. They reasoned the unjustified American support for this regime justified the extremist anti-American line.

The position of the extremists was based on theoretical and judicial arguments. To them the war was against fascism. It was not limited solely to fighting against Hitler and Mussolini, but also against Pétain, Laval, Darlan and their followers and sympathizers. For this reason, the organization of the French war effort would determine the future of France. The North African Army would almost certainly be expected to play a dominant role in the liberation of France. Since that

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28. Ibid.

army was officered by men of conservative and at times fascist tendencies, it was conceivable that a fascist regime could be installed in post-war France. In such a case, France would still have lost the war. The extremists could not and did not know that President Roosevelt was contemplating a military government, at least at the top levels of the French government, following the liberation, to forestall such an accession to power of any French fascists.[29] In that case the installation of a fascist regime probably would not have been tolerated. Everything considered, it is just as well that the extremists were ignorant of the President's intentions.

The moderates were described as the party of expediency. They insisted that General de Gaulle reach an immediate agreement with General Giraud on common military action and joint representation of French interests to the Allies. Other controversial political, legal and economic questions should be left for later determination. The moderates criticized the extremists' arguments as being theoretical and not strictly relevant to the practical problems of the moment. There could be no hope for the liberation of France or for the restoration of republican traditions, they pointed out, except by the action of the Allied armies. The most effective contribution the French could make towards the desired goals of liberation and restoration of the Republic was by unified action, not only in the resistance forces within France, but

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29. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 111.

also among all Frenchmen everywhere. Thus unity was more important than politics. When victory would be achieved over the Germans on the continent, it would be time to take up political issues.

General Catroux and several military leaders formed the core of the moderates. Massigli was the only civilian commissioner to join them. The extremist group included the civilians Philip, Pleven, Diethelm. They were joined by Admirals Auboyneau and d'Argenlieu. Naturally, it was led by General de Gaulle.

Since the extremist group ultimately triumphed not only in the newly formed French Committee of National Liberation, but also in establishing the provisional government of France in Paris following the liberation of August 1944, the extremists'justification of Fighting France, their case against General Giraud (with its anti-American implications) and their conditions for unification are of more than routine interest. They shed considerable light on the reasons for the Gaullists' intransigence and the insistence upon the political side of the questions raised, at times to the seeming exclusion of military considerations. In this respect the description Kittredge prepared of the views of the Fighting French based on conversations which he and Admiral Stark held with various members of the Fighting French, was quite complete.[30]

The Fighting French advanced to Kittredge several reasons for their leadership of the French movement. Chief among them was the

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30. Kittredge memorandum, May 21, 1943.

claim of legitimacy derived from the last legitimate government of the Third Republic, and sustained by constant resistance to both the Germans and to the Vichy brand of fascism. The leadership of the National Committee and General de Gaulle had been recognized by Great Britain, the Soviet Union and other Allied governments. Until the United States installed a rival regime in North Africa, there never was any question of any other leadership of the French war effort. The British by turning over the administration of Syria, Somaliland and Madagascar to the National Committee recognized that body as trustee of French interests. The resistance organizations and public opinion in general as expressed by leaders of the various political parties in metropolitan France supported General de Gaulle and the National Committee.

Finally, in the absence of the ability to form a French government in accordance with normal constitutional procedures, French political leaders and officials gave informal recognition or acknowledgement to the National Committee as the body qualified to represent French interests. General de Gaulle received letters from the Presidents of the French Senate, Jules Jeanneny, and the Chamber of Deputies, Édouard Herriot, indicating their support as the only means of a solution to the problems troubling France, and as the repository of political legitimacy. Such pledges of support from political leaders and officials constituted, in the eyes of the Fighting French, a quasi-legal basis for recognition of the National Committee under the leadership of General de Gaulle until the time came when the French people could freely

choose their own government.

The arguments against the legitimacy of the North African regime proceeded from those supporting the claims of the National Committee, Kittredge reported. Since General Giraud had repudiated the armistice and the authority of Vichy, he could not claim legitimacy derived from that regime, or its successor in North Africa, the Darlan Imperial Council. Foreign powers were without authority to designate French commanders. Hence, the American and British appointment of Giraud to command French forces had no legal effect. Since General Giraud's authority in its inception came from Vichy appointees and was subsequently sustained by Allied action, both these reasons vitiated his then present authority as civil and military commander. Thus, the Fighting French rejected this claim.

The National Committee was unable to recognize either the legality or the validity of any independent actions taken by General Giraud which involved the application of French laws or the representation of French interests. Even though General Giraud absolved the North African Army of its oath of personal allegiance to Marshal Pétain, their loyalty to republican traditions was questioned. Similarly, the Fighting French questioned the right of General Giraud to enforce the national conscription laws. Therefore, the Fighting French were justified in helping men who wished to leave the North African forces to join Fighting France.

Assuming the basic premise of legitimacy residing in Fighting

France, these were formidable arguments which on their own terms would justify total elimination of General Giraud and his supporters from the French movement. Hence, the extremists considered it a measure of generosity when they offered to extend under certain conditions to General Giraud and his North African forces the Gaullist legitimacy, moral support and recognition by the French people. One condition was the elimination from the North and West African administration of all persons who were Vichy appointed, who had actively collaborated with the Germans and who were fascist sympathizers.

For all of these cumulative reasons, the National Committee felt that any agreement with General Giraud should not compromise them. Rather the agreement should provide for the assumption by the central body of the authority and status of a provisional government, rather than simply that of an administrator of overseas territories. Recognition by Allied Governments of this body as the true representative of French interests was necessary. Finally, the higher ranks of the North African Army and civil administration must be purged of all persons of doubtful loyalty to democratic and republican ideals.

The extremists felt that their conditions for an agreement were not only justified by logic and theory, as described by Kittredge, but also by existing facts. They saw little or no support for General Giraud in North Africa. In fact, they reasoned that without American support, General Giraud would lose what backing he had, and French West and North Africa would go over to Fighting France. Because the British

had turned Syria, Madagascar and Somaliland over to the National Committee, the extremists saw no reason for British opposition to the addition of West and North Africa to Fighting France. The only reason the British supported General Giraud in any way, they concluded, was solely due to American influence. From this rationale, it is not difficult to understand either the basis for or the depth of the extremists' anti-American feeling.

The Fighting French were not at all insensitive to the strained relations with Washington. While Generals Giraud and de Gaulle were haggling over the place for their meeting, Adrien Tixier, the head of the Fighting French delegation to Washington, who was then in London, called on Admiral Stark on May 7 to discuss Gaullist-American relations.[31] Tixier felt the irritation that existed between Carlton Gardens and Washington resulted from a mutual failure to understand each other's intentions and policies.

Tixier tactfully stated the Fighting French grievances against American policy in North Africa. He personally regretted certain acts and statements of General de Gaulle and the National Committee. He referred to the exclusion of Fighting French participation in the North African campaign and subsequent political developments as grounds for the Fighting French conclusion that the United States was deliberately maintaining in power the present regime in North Africa. He hoped for

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31. Kittredge memorandum, May 7, 1943, Box 204, File: May 1943, COMNAVEU files.

a successful conclusion to the negotiations in progress in North Africa.

While Admiral Stark earnestly expressed his own desire for an agreement, he confessed he found it difficult to understand General de Gaulle's hesitancy to meet General Giraud at any place in North Africa, particularly since the views of both men appeared to have coincided. He repeated the American policy of urging the vital necessity of such a union of French action in the war. This was the limit to which his authority and discretion would permit him to go.

In explaining the differences that still separated the two French camps, Tixier emphasized that decisions made at that time would definitely affect the condition and the later development of French political activity in the re-establishment of republican government in France after the liberation. There were other problems, notably the residual Vichy officials who were still exercising authority in North Africa. Regardless of their present politics, the past acts and policies of these men could never be forgotten or forgiven. They must go.

Nothing could be resolved by this conversation. But it did indicate an awareness by the National Committee of a strain in relations with the United States. Tixier never established a reputation for skillful diplomacy and tact. Aside from his position as head of the delegation to Washington, the choice of him to make such representations is curious. Perhaps it was because he belonged to the extremist group. The minutes of this conversation contained no adjectives indicating cordiality or other positive tones.

What this conversation did accomplish was to restate both positions and to underline the fundamental dichotomy. Tixier spoke from the position of the extremists and emphasized the necessity of an agreement for practical military reasons, with political questions being subordinated. Even though each man may have understood the position of the other, their conversation revealed no real meshing of policies. Indeed there could be none, because the positions from which each spoke were in a large measure antithetical.

While General de Gaulle was preparing to embark for Algiers to conclude arrangements for the unification of French forces outside of France, Jean Moulin succeeded in unifying the resistance forces within metropolitan France. This audacious and resourceful man, known as Rex in the resistance, presided over the first meeting of the National Council of the Resistance in Paris on May 25, 1943.[32] This meeting signified a more efficient and effective domestic French resistance movement to conduct sabotage operations against the Germans and to wage the battle of the interior when the time was ripe following the expected Allied invasion of the continent. It also signified the triumph of General de Gaulle in unifying and in establishing formally his control over the resistance movement. In this way General de Gaulle established himself and his movement in France. When the Allies arrived a year later, they would find as complete a Gaullist infra-

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32. Colonel Passy (André Dewavrin), Missions Secrètes en France, (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1951), p. 240.

structure as courage, hard work and patriotism could construct.

The reasons for the creation of the Resistance Council were twofold: efficiency and politics. A centralized organization could coordinate operations, direct the flow of supplies from England and conduct espionage against the Germans on a larger scale. The Resistance Council was intended to form the nucleus of a reduced national representation. Indeed, under the circumstances it was the only national representation possible, whatever its limitations. General de Gaulle was the President of the Resistance Council and would maintain contact with it through his delegate, at first Jean Moulin and later Georges Bidault. There was no doubt that the Resistance Council was to be under the direction of General de Gaulle and the National Committee. The instructions the General gave Jean Moulin in this respect were quite specific.[33]

The ultimate goal was to insure that the liberation and victory were French, as General de Gaulle explained in his message to the first meeting of the Resistance Council.[34] To achieve this goal it was an imperative necessity that the nation organize for itself a concerted French effort. The Resistance Council was to be the focal point of all the energies of the metropole against both the Germans and the collaborationists in the struggle for victory and liberation.

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33. De Gaulle, Unity-Documents, pp. 134-135.

34. Passy, Missions Secretes en France, p. 239.

The resistance groups did become organized to the extent that they were called a "Secret Army". Subsequent events in 1944 showed the efficacy of this organization. However, in their inception many organizations spontaneously arose in the Occupied Zone soon after the 1940 armistice was concluded. At the end of 1940 the British Government set up a Special Operations Executive, or S. O. E., to maintain contact with the resistance groups. Later, after the United States had entered the war, the Allies agreed that the S. O. E. should act as the coordinating authority to deal with the general staffs of the Allied Governments in preparing and coordinating resistance activities with Allied military operations.[35]

By the summer of 1942 General de Gaulle realized that perhaps the most significant military contribution the French could make in the war effort would be by organizing and coordinating resistance activities in France. Accordingly, he made fairly detailed plans and he requested considerable material aid. During the summer of 1942, arrangements were made in London for support of the French resistance movement. The S. O. E. was to be the overall coordinator and the American Office of Strategic Services (O. S. S.) was to supply additional material and personnel as required.[36]

The North African operation and the subsequent establishment of

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35. Kittredge memorandum, May 6, 1943, Enclosure (A) to COMNAVEU letter, ser. 00167, May 17, 1943.

36. Ibid.

the Darlan regime worked radical changes in the relationship of the French to Allied planning. The establishment of a third major French group produced a potential rival to General de Gaulle and the National Committee for dominance of the resistance movement in metropolitan France. The Fighting French increased pressure on the Allied staffs to recognize General de Gaulle and the National Committee as the channel through which support of the resistance movement should be provided. The Anglo-American alliance in this instance was somewhat embarrassed by American backing of General Giraud while the British continued to back General de Gaulle.

The arrival in North Africa of officers from the Vichy Armistice Army gave the Fighting French some grounds for their anxiety over the possibility of rival resistance organizations. However, a compromise, of sorts, was devised in London in November and December 1942, by which the O. S. S. assumed responsibility for coordinating resistance activities in the Mediterranean regions of France, presumably with the participation of those former Vichy Army Officers. The S. O. E. retained its original jurisdiction, as it were, over the greater part of France. Both the O. S. S. and the S. O. E. cooperated to a great extent and the division of jurisdiction was apparently of little practical importance.

By the spring of 1943, the resistance groups in France had become large enough for serious consideration of sending arms and other material to a force which the resistance leaders claimed

numbered 150,000. General de Gaulle had directed Jean Moulin at the end of February to consolidate the resistance movement into the Resistance Council. The resistance had become large enough and sufficiently well organized to raise its level of operations from local sabotage and intelligence gathering to sustaining a veritable Secret Army, capable of waging the coming battle of the interior. The amount of supplies required and the aircraft for their delivery would not be small items. Clearly, this was a matter for discussion and eventual determination at the level of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Matters had reached this point when General de Gaulle departed London for Algiers on May 30.

Admiral Stark and his staff were generally well-informed about the organizations and plans of the resistance groups. On March 5, General de Gaulle sent four resistance leaders who were temporarily in London to give Admiral Stark a first hand account of the resistance, after they had talked to General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Among the four were Jean Moulin and Emmanuel d'Astier, a brother of General François d'Astier.

All four men were emphatic in their insistance that the French resistance organizations accept the leadership of General de Gaulle. They informed Admiral Stark that since October, 1942, the leadership of the resistance movements had been unified under a directory of General de Gaulle's representatives, of whom d'Astier and Moulin were two. The resistance groups considered themselves Gaullists, which in

France was synonymous with resistance to Germans and to Vichy collaborators. They looked to General de Gaulle for direction and for collaboration with the British and American Governments. The resistance had penetrated nearly all existing French Government services and they had been assured of all the support of highly placed officials in nearly all of them. Finally, they gave Admiral Stark a description of current operations and the planning and conduct of the battle of the interior, as well as an outline of the supplies required for a successful prosecution of their plans.[37]

One evident French purpose was to persuade the Allies to admit them to the Allied Staffs for planning any contemplated activities of the resistance groups and for insuring the maximum of coordination with the Allies when the cross-channel operation would take place. Colonel Pierre Billotte, of General de Gaulle's staff, frankly admitted that security was a problem. But he felt that if only a few Fighting French liaison officers were given sufficient information to coordinate the activities of the Secret Army, the inclusion of an unduly large number of the Fighting French in the secrets disclosed would be avoided. The claim was made that coordinated Secret Army activity could reduce German counter-activity on D-Day by at least one third.[38]

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37. Kittredge memorandum, March 5, 1943, COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3, p. 34.

38. Matthews to Hull, Telegram 1791, March 13, 1943, U.S. National Archives, Department of State, 851.01/1058.

General de Gaulle was giving these discussions special attention. He had already held discussions with General Sir Alan Brooke and he spoke to Admiral Stark specifically about it. He felt it was a matter that ought to be considered by the highest American authorities and by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.[39] The substance of the talks was reported to Washington by Freeman Matthews of the Embassy to the Secretary of State,[40] and by Admiral Stark in a personal letter to Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet.[41]

Emmanuel d'Astier discussed the resistance movement again with Admiral Stark on April 30. He urged the immediate consideration by the British and American staffs of the problem of the coordination of the resistance movement activities with present and future allied operations. While he repeated much of what had already been said, he did give some interesting details, such as the existence of 102 airfields suitable for landing aircraft delivering supplies to the resistance and comments on the state of German morale.

D'Astier insisted again that all anti-German sentiment was Gaullist. Although few of the Gaullists in France knew anything of General de Gaulle as a man, they all knew him as a symbol of unrelenting, active opposition to the Germans and to the collaborators. Ever since

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39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., Also Matthews to Hull, Telegram 1792, March 13, 1943, U.S. National Archives, Department of State, 851.01/1059.

41. COMNAVEU Documents, vol. 3. p. 33.

June 1940 he had expressed by radio what the majority of Frenchmen had felt. Although most of the resistance groups were by necessity autonomous and independent at that time, they nevertheless looked to General de Gaulle and to his staff for leadership and they expected to cooperate with the Allies through General de Gaulle's staff. He warned that since General Giraud had no following in France, the elimination of General de Gaulle would probably mean the resistance groups would act independently of any other French group and of the Allies. In other words, d'Astier told Admiral Stark that only General de Gaulle could be counted on to produce the cooperation and coordination of the sizeable Secret Army.[42]

When General de Gaulle left London for Algiers on May 30, his purpose was to come to an agreement with General Giraud for the unification of French forces outside of France. Such an agreement would put him in a position where he could eventually dominate the entire French war effort. A vital part of his almost mystic claim to legitimacy was the support he alleged by the French people in France. The primary indicator of this support was the adherence of the resistance groups to "Gaullism," even if to many of them it meant only active opposition to the Germans and to the Vichy collaborators. Thus in the short run the establishment of the Resistance Council and its expression of loyalty to General de Gaulle was of crucial importance.

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42. Enclosure (M) to Kittredge memorandum, May 6, 1943.

The meaning for the future was equally apparent to him. If a large part of the liberation of France could be accomplished by the Secret Army, loyal to General de Gaulle, he would be in an extremely strong, if not virtually impregnable, position to control the provisional government of France following the liberation.

It is a curious phenomenon that for all of the astute political insight and sagacity exhibited by American Embassy and Navy officials in London at that time, their dispatches, memoranda and letters, did not reveal an awareness of this possibility. The absence of such a conclusion is even more curious in the light of their undoubted knowledge of the distrust of General de Gaulle by the President and the Secretary of State, who saw the General as a potential dictator. This distrust was in no way allayed by General de Gaulle's Grosvenor House speech on May 4, at which time Murphy, Macmillan and Catroux, among others took it for an open confession of a drive for personal power. Murphy cabled their apprehensions to Hull in Washington.[43] Catroux went even farther and recommended that the American and British Governments, possibly through Admiral Stark, take a firm stand by expressing their support of French unity, and also their opposition to General de Gaulle's drive for personal power.[44] Neverthless, the Secret Army was seen only in a military context with little or no recorded thought to its political implications.

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43. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, vol. 2, p. 108.

44. Ibid., p. 122.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Any attempt to draw conclusions from an examination of the conduct of United States relations with General de Gaulle and the Fighting French is fraught with difficulties. Both sides looked at the major issues from entirely different viewpoints. Washington constantly complained that General de Gaulle was more interested in politics than in pursuing the war. General de Gaulle, feeling victory was inevitable, devoted the bulk of his time and energy towards assuring a position for France among the victors. This position would be consonant with her status as a great power. Since Fighting France commanded far less military resources than the United States or Great Britain, the position of France would have to be achieved by political means. Thus the stage was set for real difficulties, which were in their turn exacerbated by the conflicting personalities of the main players.

United States policy towards General de Gaulle and the French National Committee was anything but sympathetic. American and French interests conflicted on more than one occasion. In addition, the personalities of General de Gaulle and President Roosevelt clashed constantly.

Where the President sought to guide and at times to manipulate General de Gaulle, the General stood firm and remained intransigent. Moreover, the President suspected the General of harboring aspirations for personal power and the General in turn suspected the President of a fundamental hostility towards French interests. The fact the evidence shows neither suspicion was really justified is not as important as the fact that both men thought they were.

Admiral Stark in London and General Eisenhower in Algiers were caught between these upper and nether millstones. That they succeeded in retaining the confidence of the President and gaining that of the General, or at least establishing and keeping good relations with him, speaks well of their sagacity and diplomatic skill.

The Gaullist press, their publicists and their supporters criticized American policy more frequently than not. Most of the criticism was centered on American reluctance or failure to pursue French interests as assiduously as the United States Government pursued its own. Domestic American critics also attacked United States policy on ideological lines. They favored embracing General de Gaulle as the courageous hero of French resistance to Hitler and to the unpopular Vichy regime. Both criticisms were far from the mark.

The United States Government, as any government must, had to identify its interests and then pursue them. It is fair ground for the contemporary critic or the historian in later years to take issue with the identification of these interests and with how they were pursued.

The purpose of this study was not so much to comment on this point, as it was to examine how those interests were pursued by Admiral Stark in London and to elucidate any lessons that might be learned.

The over-riding interest of the United States in 1942 and 1943 was the successful prosecution of the war to the unconditional surrender of the Axis. Whether military considerations should have taken precedence over political considerations in regard to post-war settlements was not particularly relevant to this inquiry. The fact was the President was determined to win the war before making political commitments. For American policy this objective was paramount.

That General de Gaulle early saw the Axis inevitably losing and sought to achieve his political goals as a result of the war is relevant. Herein lay the essential divergence of French and American views, which may also be explained in terms of their relative power or lack of it. The United States as a dominant partner in the Allied camp could be expected to wield sufficient weight as to have no doubt that its views would prevail in any post-war settlement. Fighting France, on the other hand, lacking the great power of the United States, would have to be in an advantageous political position at the end of the war in order to influence any settlement. Therefore, political maneuvering was far more important for General de Gaulle than it was for President Roosevelt. Much mischief arose out of this divergence.

The ultimate military operation was to be a cross channel attack to liberate the continent of Europe. Before it could be attempted,

Allied Planners felt it was necessary to invade North Africa. This first operation would relieve pressure on Egypt, reduce the danger of Suez falling to the Nazis, and end the possibility of German use of Dakar and the threat such an eventuality posed to the security of the Western hemisphere. Once North Africa was in Allied hands, the way would be clear for attacks on Sicily and Italy.

In planning the North African invasion, Operation TORCH, the Fighting French were deliberately excluded at the specific insistance of the President. Aside from any personal prejudices the President may have had, there were two good reasons for their exclusion. First was the probable lack of security of secrets divulged to members of the French National Committee. Leaks, unauthorized disclosures and indiscretions in that group were more the rule than the exception. The memory of the unsuccessful Dakar expedition of 1940 and the suspected French leaks in security weighed heavily on the planners minds. Second, the influence of General de Gaulle and the French National Committee in North Africa was non-existent for all practical purposes. One of the Allied aims was to obtain cooperation or at least non-resistance by the French forces in North Africa. It was felt that the participation of Fighting French forces would only induce resistance to the Allied landings by the North African French.

Once the Axis had been eliminated from French North and West Africa, the Allies sought to bring the Fighting French and the North African French into some sort of a union to provide for a coordinated

French war effort. Such a fusion could only be effected by the French themselves. Even so, American and British interests and obligations were deeply involved, or thought to be, in the conditions under which a fusion might be brought about. The interplay of the three parties produced a complicated political situation.

The United States in pursuing a policy directed only towards unconditional surrender looked for a fusion of the French forces for military purposes. General de Gaulle in pursuing a policy of restoring France to her former position sought a fusion for political purposes. The objectives of the United States not only differed from those of General de Gaulle, but Washington also suspected his motives. The legacy of St. Pierre and Miquelon was the lingering antipathy of Secretary of State Hull towards General de Gaulle and his suspected dictatorial aspirations. In addition, General de Gaulle's personality and that of the President did not make for smooth relations under any conditions.

Even if the United States had wished to install General de Gaulle instead of General Giraud as civil and military commander in North Africa, it would have been impossible, because he lacked the necessary support there. Actually, the North African Army was actively opposed to him at first. Murphy reported that Admiral Darlan had offered to replace any official the Allies desired to remove, provided a qualified replacement could be found, no matter what his politics. Murphy noted that no nominations were made, because there were no other men

available.[1]

General Catroux was aware of the practical limitations of installing a Gaullist regime or even of establishing Gaullist influence in North Africa. This was the reason he advised General de Gaulle as late as March 1943 to delay going to North Africa. In London, General de Gaulle and his supporters could have it both ways: complain of obstruction of their attempts to unify the two French camps without having to accept responsibility for possible failure, because the British prevented General de Gaulle from going to North Africa.

United States policy was crystal clear: we would deal with those French authorities, wherever they might be, who were in effective control of their own jurisdictions. This was the local authorities doctrine which explained American policy towards the various parts of the French Empire. Admiral Stark and General Bolte were directed to consult with the French National Committee only when it exercised control over areas which had become strategically important to the United States.

The United States dealt only with those persons exercising authority in North Africa. If this policy did not conform to General de Gaulle's underlying political philosophy and concept of France,

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1. Murphy to Hull and Davis, Telegram Algiers 6774, NAF 119, 231046Z January 1943, Box 204, Files: February 1943, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe, files, Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. See Appendix, Document II.

the United States can hardly be blamed justifiably on this count. General de Gaulle was dealt with at least in proportion to his political importance. However, his personality and skillful intransigence won him more consideration from the Americans and the British than could otherwise have been expected.

This study has been primarily concerned with the political issues of a lesser magnitude and how they were dealt with by the United States representatives to the French National Committee in London. But it has been necessary to deal with the larger political issues, conflicts and rivalries to place the area of main concern into a proper perspective. Any evaluation of the actual conduct of United States relations with Fighting France at this working level, as opposed to the level of the personal diplomacy of the President, must necessarily turn on how Admiral Stark performed his diplomatic duties.

The choice of Admiral Stark for this delicate but important diplomatic duty was a happy one. As a former Chief of Naval Operations, he brought an enormous amount of prestige to his primary duties as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe. In this capacity he was designated to conduct consultations with the French National Committee for the conduct of the war. But the course of events soon turned his collateral consultative functions on military matters into those of a de facto ambassador, dealing with political questions.

Of all the American and British leaders who dealt with General de Gaulle in this period, Admiral Stark was the only one who actually

got along well with him. Perhaps there was some form of inherent compatibility between the two professional military men, the one a deep water sailor and the other a tank commander. Both were frank and honest with each other and they enjoyed mutual respect. This is not to say that both men were immune to anger, frustration and irritations. The point remains that despite whatever difficultire may have existed, personal relations between the two men never became bitter. No breach was ever so serious as to be irreconcilable.

Admiral Stark's tasks included reporting functions as well as conducting consultations. In both tasks he was fortunate in having the assistance of Commander Tracy B. Kittredge, USNR. Kittredge performed an invaluable staff service for Admiral Stark by composing countless memoranda, which were notable for their lucidity and keeness of perception. Many of these memoranda were the basis for telegrams sent from the Embassy in London to the State Department. History has borne out their accuracy.

The specific problems dealt with by Admiral Stark were derivatives of the larger political questions which were the specific concern of the highest levels in London, Washington, Algiers and Carlton Gardens. Despite their relatively minor importance, these problems could have grown to major proportions if they had not been handled properly. For example, Admiral Stark returned the "treachery letter" General de Gaulle sent him in protest to the Clark-Darlan agreement on grounds that it was sent by mistake. The alternative

would have been to make further conversations impossible.

Similarly, Admiral Stark had to tell General de Gaulle his trip to Washington, scheduled for early December 1942, had been postponed until late December. The Admiral was conversant with the President's position as well as understanding that of General de Gaulle.

The question of recruitment of seamen was one issue that could not be resolved in London. The ultimate solution was an agreement between General de Gaulle and General Giraud. But Admiral Stark did succeed in reaching a compromise, which General de Gaulle repudiated in a heavy-handed manner. That this repudiation did not do any permanent damage testifies more to Admiral Stark's patience and his good personal relations with General de Gaulle than it does to the diplomacy of the General.

In the JAMAIQUE incident, Admiral Stark was protecting a specific American interest. His order to place an armed gangway watch on the ship was a determining factor in the sailing of the ship as scheduled. He stood firm. He refused the blandishments of various Fighting French officials to ask General de Gaulle to insure the timely sailing of the ship. This firmness succeeded in frustrating Gaullist attempts to wrest control of the ship and its crew.

Admiral Stark was only an interested bystander in the events leading up to the British refusal to provide transportation for General de Gaulle's proposed North African odyssey. The situation came to a head when the Allied staff in Algiers replied in the name of General

Eisenhower and suggested a delay in General de Gaulle's visit until the Tunisian campaign ended. General de Gaulle took this message to be a personal reply from General Eisenhower. He addressed a stinging reply to him through the U.S. communications services. Admiral Stark's tactful return to General de Gaulle of this reply saved the General later embarrassment and avoided what would have been a wholly unnecessary and unpleasant uproar.

In each of these incidents described, as well as in many other minor ones. American relations were conducted with firmness, tact and a notable absence of rancor, whatever may have been the private feelings of Admiral Stark and Kittredge. This absence of rancor in London was in direct contrast to the harsh comments of the President to Churchill and the then prevailing State Department predilection against General de Gaulle. While American officials in London may not have agreed with General de Gaulle, they at least understood the essential elements of the Fighting French position and the Gaullist rationale.[2] The same could not be said of Washington.

The conception of the role of France in the prosecution of the war, or at the very least the role she should play, was central to General de Gaulle's conception of the war and its aims. Out of this conception it is possible to distill some essential strands of Gaullist

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2. Memorandum, March 1, 1943, in "Selected Documents from Correspondence of Admiral Harold R. Stark, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe," vol. 3, pp. 29-32.

thought which, although circumstances may have changed, have themselves generally remained constant. Thus, it may truly be said that the Gaullist era in France began on June 18, 1940 when General de Gaulle raised high the flag of France and commenced his arduous efforts to redeem his country's honor. Although this era was interrupted from 1946 to 1958, it continues today as the Fifth Republic.

President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull cannot be blamed for failing to anticipate the course of events for the ensuing quarter of a century. But from such a perspective, it is possible to look back, to analyze and to identify major strands or conceptions which have endured. It may also be profitable to do so, since only General de Gaulle's circumstances have changed dramatically, but not his conceptions. This is not to say that General de Gaulle has necessarily failed to keep up with the times, but rather that his assumptions and conceptions are fundamental and not susceptible to changing circumstances.

The cornerstone of General de Gaulle's conception of France was that she remained a great power. As such, France must be independent of other powers. A third factor was the essential unity of France, which was a product of her history and traditions. France was far more than the sum of its parts. This concept lends a mystical tone to General de Gaulle's concept of France. It also provided the basis for his claim to legitimacy, if not to legality, in representing French interests. These three elements run like red threads through the fabric of General de Gaulle's concept of France and of her position in

the world.

Two corollaries may be derived from these elements of Gaullism. The first was the essential unity of political realities and military operations. The purpose of conducting military operations was to preserve, protect, achieve or to create political realities. Politics should govern military operations. The second corollary was a suspicion of the United States. The Gaullists saw American opposition to them, or at least non-acceptance of their position, as an expression of hostility and not as an expression of American reluctance to concur in their outlooks.

For sound tactical reasons, General de Gaulle did not stress France's status as a great power to the President, although it was central to his beliefs. He alluded to it in his letter to the President when he stressed the necessity of a victory which would reconcile France with herself and with her friends. Without such a victory European reconstruction and the peace of the world would be jeopardized.[3] Obviously, only a great power could carry such weight. General de Gaulle, however, did remind Eden that France was a great power.[4]

General de Gaulle did stress the factor of independence to the

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3. General de Gaulle to President Roosevelt, letter October 6, 1942, U.S. National Archives, Department of State, 851.01/722 1/3.

4. De Gaulle, Charles, Unity, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 143.

President. He maintained that only Frenchmen could be the judge of French interests. The French should be consulted each time there was a question of French interests or of French participation in the war. At least part of the basis of General de Gaulle's constant insistence on French participation in the planning of military operations can be found in this assertion. The remainder can be found in his concept of France as a great power.

The factor of the essential unity of France is both difficult to describe and to understand. It is a somewhat mystical conception in which France exists over and above Frenchmen. It is a quality of "nation-ness" which gives a legitimacy to those who apprehend it. In this way, General de Gaulle who refused to accept the armistice of 1940, actually acted in accordance with the concept of the essential unity of France, regardless of any legalistic rationale which may have given colorable constitutional authority to the conclusion of the armistice and later to the investiture of plenary powers in Marshal Pétain.

The essential unity of France might be taken as an expression of the soul of the nation, which can exist independently of the regularly constituted national authority. It is an expression of French history, which in previous troubled times produced figures such as Joan of Arc and Henry IV to lead the nation to salvation. In this respect, Charles de Gaulle was following a well-established historical pattern. It is important to remember that no important civil or military leaders in 1940 joined General de Gaulle in continuing the fight and that he

repeatedly offered to serve under anyone more qualified to head the movement. Thus the mantle devolved on him.

Humility is a virtue not often ascribed to Charles de Gaulle, but in 1940 it fit him. In the absence of any other leaders coming to the fore, he held high the flag of France. Reluctantly and really by default, General de Gaulle became the symbol of French courage and resistance. By force of circumstances, the Fighting French in their own eyes became a French moral entity.

Washington generally misperceived the moral content of the Fighting French outlook. General de Gaulle's strong and difficult personality and his policy of intransigence antagonized the President and Secretary of State. Whether another leader of Fighting France could have achieved results similar to those General de Gaulle ultimately achieved is an intriguing, but irrelevant question. The point is Washington not only suspected General de Gaulle of dictatorial aspirations, but also refused to make post-war political commitments. The substantive differences were as important as the personality differences.

The perspective of time shows the American suspicions were actually erroneous, although they may have been quite reasonable at the time. In this respect, General de Gaulle must be held at least partially accountable for his failure to convince Washington otherwise by his diplomacy and by his acts of his real intentions. But such a judgment should be tempered with a realization that in the State

Department the Secretary, the Under Secretary, Sumner Welles, and the Assistant Secretary, Adolf Berle, were genuinely and at times unreasonably hostile to General de Gaulle. Also, Admiral Leahy who, upon his return from his post at Vichy, became Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief, exercised an anti-Gaullist influence.

While it cannot be said with certainty, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the American position may have hardened to a degree, perhaps beyond changing, eight months before Admiral Stark commenced formal consultations with the French National Committee in August 1942. The Gaullist occupation of St. Pierre and Miquelon in December 1941 under circumstances almost constituting a breach of faith, less than three weeks after Pearl Harbor and in clear violation of expressed hemisphere policy in the Act of Havana could only create a major stir. It is not clear whether General de Gaulle appreciated the probable effect on the United States of his unilateral and unexpected act. But it is clear that he viewed the situation as a purely internal French affair.

Here is a clue to General de Gaulle's greatness and to the weakness of his politics. Whatever greatness history will give him, will probably be because he very clearly and correctly saw the role that France should play in the world, and with courage and skill he achieved that role for France. If indeed, the honor and the soul of France were saved, Charles de Gaulle must be given a large share of the credit.

Like a classical tragic hero, General de Gaulle had a tragic flaw which may unfairly in time bring him down, as it kept him down in the

early war years. That flaw was his viewing the world only through French eyes, with neither regard nor sympathy for the interests, concerns or politics of others. This myopia explained General de Gaulle's genuine surprise over American reaction to the occupation of St. Pierre and Miquelon. It also goes a long way towards explaining why he was not able after that to enjoy the confidence of Washington. He was simply pro-French to a fault.

The saving grace of United States relations with Fighting France was the good personal relations between Admiral Stark and General de Gaulle, as well as those between Kittredge and the French staff. Without these bright spots the story might very well have been an unrelieved one of suspicions, frustrations and recriminations. Whatever success there was could be measured more in terms of people than of policy.

APPENDIX

In the mass of original documents contained in the files of Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, two were found to be of such special interest that their publication is warranted. The first is a rough draft by Captain Tracy B, Kittredge, USNR, of the background and negotiations leading to the extension of Lend-Lease aid to the Fighting French. Apparently Captain Kittredge intended this draft to be part of his proposed history of United States - French relations, 1942-1944. This Lend-Lease agreement was negotiated by Brigadier-General Charles L. Bolte, at the request of Secretary of State Hull. Thus, it did not fall strictly within the purview of Admiral Stark's diplomatic duties. However, extension of Lend-Lease aid was an important aspect of American relations with the Fighting French.

The text has not been edited beyond minor and obvious corrections. Footnote references have been added for clarity. All documents referred to in the footnotes can be found in Box 207, File: Lend-Lease, Commander , U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, files, Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

The second document is a telegram sent by Robert Murphy, Personal Representative of President Roosevelt in Algiers, to the Secretary

of State on January 23, 1943. It is a spirited defense of American policy in North Africa at that time. It has hitherto not been published.

Document I

Rough Draft by Captain Tracy B. Kittredge, USNR

The collapse of France in June 1940 marked the end of the era of cooperation and trust between France and the United States. At the blackest moment when the French Government was considering surrender or flight to Africa, France appealed to the United States for help. At that time, however, American opinion would not have backed an entry into the war, and distance and lack of war material in the United States barred any offer which might give France the hope of continued success. Now France and all of her colonies could not be considered as a single political entity, but only as a group of loosely connected units bound together more by tradition than by control.

On November 7, 1941, the French National Committee, under General de Gaulle, controlled the very useful Pacific Ocean island of New Caledonia, so situated as to be a much needed stationary aircraft carrier and base from which to operate in the South Seas against any Japanese invasion of Australia. The Committee also controlled French Equatorial Africa, the Cameroons and Tchad: a strip running from the Atlantic Ocean to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, which could save almost 15,000 miles of more or less hostile ocean for troops and light equip-

ment bound for the Middle East.

By a letter of November 11, 1941, President Roosevelt declared that the defense of any French territory under the control of the French National Committee was vital to the defense of the United States. For almost a year Fighting France had been receiving Lend-Lease aid through transfers of goods requested by British requisitions. The French Purchasing Commission submitted requests received from the French National Committee to the British Supply Council. If these requests met with the approval of various British officials, a British requisition was then prepared and submitted. French requirements were submitted by the British as a part of British requirements, and no separate allocations were made to the French. Their needs for allocated products were included in allocations made to the British. Bids for goods to be assigned by the Munitions Assignment Board were made in behalf of the French by the British, and in all respects Lend-Lease aid to French territories was handled just as if these territories were a part of the British Empire.

The Army had bumped its nose twice, once in New Caledonia and once in Brazzaville, at the advice of the State Department which could not see in the French National Committee, already acknowledged and recognized by eight European Governments-in-Exile, either a de facto or de jure government. The General on the spot had been advised and encouraged to come to local agreements in regard to any reciprocal aid with the local governors. These governors, however, felt that since

they had been appointed by the French National Committee, they should report to and be guided by London, in accordance with the best traditions of French Bureaucracy. Since the Army plans for global warfare required the organization of many territories, the State Department was at last requested to arrange some understanding with the French National Committee.

On July 29, 1942, the State Department cabled the American Embassy in London, instructing them to have General Charles L. Bolte, recently appointed, together with Admiral Harold R. Stark as Military Representatives of the United States near the French National Committee, exchange letters with the French National Committee, and cabled the suggested text of a letter from the French National Committee which would be acceptable to the United States.[1] The Embassy was also instructed to designate one of its officers to work with General Bolte as a technical advisor. The State Department stressed the fact that the Fighting French were not a government, but that they had been receiving some lend-lease assistance from the United States. General Bolte was to stress the past assistance, and secure General de Gaulle's agreement that reciprocal aid should be provided immediately in African territories and in New Caledonia. Information was also requested as to the names of the authorities with whom the matter should be discussed in Africa and in New Caledonia by the American Generals in the field.

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1. State Department to Embassy in London, No, 3544 and 3545. July 29, 1942.

The following day, July 30, Mr. H. Freeman Matthews, Counselor of the Embassy, furnished General Bolte with copies of the State Department cables and suggested that Mr. Alan N. Steyne, Second Secretary of the Embassy, might be assigned to work with the General on the particular question of Lend-Lease aid.[2] Mr. Steyne reported with drafts of two proposed letters for General Bolte's signature:

(a) Letter to General de Gaulle on African Rubber Supplies

(b) Letter to General de Gaulle proposing an Anglo-American-French Tripartite Agreement.

General Bolte, armed with these letters, called on General de Gaulle to break the ice. He furnished the Embassy with copies for the Embassy files, the State Department and the British Foreign Office.

On the first of August, M. René Pleven, called on Mr. Steyne, at the latter's request. He was read pertinent extracts from the State Department's cables, and the complete draft of the proposed letter from the French National Committee to the Government of the United States. M. Pleven suggested several minor changes in view of the financial position of the National Committee. He feared that as worded the United States might have the right to call upon the colonies for much of their exportable material upon which the National Committee was dependent for foreign exchange. Mr. Steyne assured him that only such materials as were to be used in situ would be called for under Lend-Lease

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2. Matthews to Bolte July 30, 1942.

and that any exportable material would be taken under the Tripartite Agreement. M. Pleven then agreed that the text of General de Gaulle's letter would follow the State Department's proposed draft. [3]

General Bolte called on General de Gaulle on August 3 and presented him a letter which enclosed the State Department's proposed draft of the letter from the French National Committee which would be agreeable to the United States Government. General Bolte requested and was granted, immediate agreement to the application of reciprocal aid to the French African territories, New Caledonia, however, remained under discussion. [4]

On the 6th and 8th of August, Mr. Steyne, Major Walker and Commander Kittredge, conferred with M. Herve Alphand, who raised certain objections to the basic text: [5]

(a) The drain of liquid funds of the French National Committee and the loss of foreign exchange from the possible loss of exports.

(b) The possibility of an eventual balancing of the account in cash.

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3. Memorandum August 2, 1942 from Steyne to Bolte, Subject: Conversation with M. Pleven about Agreement for an Exchange of Letters Relative to Reciprocal Aid by the U. S. A. to Fighting France and by Fighting France to the U. S. A.

4. Message from General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, to European Theater Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, No. 2812 July 31, 1942, directed Bolte to endeavor to arrange for immediate application of reciprocal Lend-Lease in Fighting French African territories and in New Caledonia. Eisenhower replied to Marshall on August 3.

5. Memorandum of Conference by Major R. N. Walker, USA Army Liaison Officer.

(c) The phraseology which would permit French aid to be used outside of French territories.

(d) The lack of any official confirmation that the exports of the colonies were to be excluded from the Lend-Lease agreement and were to be handled under Tripartite procedures.

These French objections were immediately cabled to the State Department for consideration. In a cable on August 18, the State Department informed General Bolte that it agreed to all modifications proposed by the French. This information was incorporated into a letter from Major Walker to M. Alphand.

A State Department cable of August 19 suggested the deletion of the phrase "have the honor" from the French note.[6] This cable also gave a draft of General Bolte's reply, and suggested that he sign as "Military Representative of the United States of American near the French National Committee." For the purpose of preparing a press release information was requested as to who would sign the French note and with what title. The National Committee informed the Embassy by telephone that M. Maurice Dejean would sign for the French using the title of "National Commissioner for Foreign Affairs." The State Department was so informed that day.[7]

The National Committee proposed that the letter from them should be a French translation of the Department's text. The Embassy informed

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6. Hull to Ambassador John G. Winant in London, August 19, 1942, No. 3928.

7. Winant to Hull, August 20, 1942, No. 4649.

them that only the English text could be considered to be authoritative without submission to the State Department. In view of the urgency of completing the agreement, the National Committee and the Embassy agreed that the text might be submitted in both languages, the English text, however to be authoritative.[8]

On the 20th of August, the State Department cabled the Embassy instructions not to conclude any exchange of notes with the French pending further instructions.[9] England was paying for her cable policy of the last hundred years. Apparently New Zealand had not given final instructions to her Ambassador, and it was desired to announce the signature of the French, Australian, and New Zealand Governments in the same press release. (Sic semper propagandae).

On August 20, M. Alphand received from the Delegation of the Fighting French in Washington, a document entitled "An Agreement for Direct Assistance to New Caledonia." M. Alphand forwarded a copy to Mr. Steyne at the same time suggesting that the document was now superceded by the letter from the French National Committee to General Bolte. He stated that in any event the procedure suggested would be unacceptable to the National Committee. M. Alphand stated that the National Committee felt that any requests for supplies or services to be furnished by France or programs of supplies to be provided by the

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8. Major Walker to Herve Alphand August 20, 1942.

9. Hull to Winant in London August 20, 1942, No. 3955.

Americans, must be approved by the Committee, "who had sole responsibility in the matter."[10] A priority cable to Washington was immediately answered by the State Department, informing the Embassy that the New Caledonia Agreement was covered by paragraph 6 of the French note.[11]

The State Department's cable also revised the exchange procedure. In the absence of General de Gaulle, and of General Bolte, the Department strongly preferred an exchange of third person notes. The American acceptance note would be initialed by General Dahlquist in place of General Bolte.[12] M. Alphand was informed of the contents of the Department's cable by Mr. Steyne by phone, and by Major Walker in a letter.

A cable from the State Department on September 2 requested that the note be exchanged at 9:30 A.M. Washington time (2:30 P.M. London time) on September 3. The cable gave the text of the press release that the Department proposed to release at that time. The National Committee were immediately informed and all arrangements made. The French desired to make a brief release, and the text of the proposed release was cabled immediately to Washington. The release was immediately approved by Washington, with the exception that the notes were to be exchanged "between Brigadier General John E. Dahlquist, Acting Military

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10. Alphand to Steyne, August 20, 1942.

11. Hull to Winant in London, August 21, 1942, No. 3875.

12. General John E. Dahlquist had by this time relieved General Bolte.

Representative of the United States of America, and Monsieur Maurice Dejean, representing the French National Committee."[13] The proposed French release would have designated M. Dejean as "Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, representing the French National Committee."

The exchange of notes was completed in London at 1420 London time on 3 September, 1942, and press release was made at 1430.

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13. Hull to Winant September 2, 1942, No. 4205.

Document II

Telegram, Murphy to Hull, January 23, 1943[1]

It seems clear to me that the unfavorable press comment results largely from the fundamental mistake of interpreting current events in North Africa in terms of Metropolitan France of other days. This area is not France, but a colonial region that has always been socially, religiously, racially and psychologically different from France.

In the light of events since 1940, the political situation here, always different from that in France, is even less understandable today by those who attempt to do so in terms of the France of 1914-1918.

There is a great shortage of qualified men to fill special positions in Morocco and Algeria. A continued orderly administration is essential and serious consequences to our military operations result from abrupt and radical changes, especially if little known or unqualified personnel were introduced.

Critics have failed to understand: (a) our objective here, and (b) the problems which confronted us on our arrival. We are engaged

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1. Algiers 6774, NAF 119 231046Z January, 1943, in Box 204, File: February 1943, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe file, Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

on a military operation, whose purpose is to gain control of North Africa and the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

In order to accomplish this objective we dealt with those French whom we found in power here who were willing to aid us by maintaining order and our lines of communication and by putting the French armed forces at their disposal into the fight.

We did not find the ideal Frenchman whom the critics see from the heights of their Ivory Towers. We found Frenchmen who, after being defeated by Germany, had undergone two years of German pressure and propaganda. We found Frenchmen who have changed and who no longer think as did Clemenceau. In working with them we made only one condition: that they showed a wish to fight Germany.

Our critics seem primarily interested, not in the military operation, but in a return to the ideal of France they have in their memories. That is simply impossible in this colonial area. It must wait until the people of continental France are again free. Pressures to accomplish the impossible in French Africa can only have one result: embarrass military operations and make our task harder.

A regenerated France can be brought into being only in France itself. Any attempt to set the pattern for that regeneration before France is liberated is doomed to utter failure and would be inconsistent with the President's declared policy. It must come from within the French, aided by what influence we may be able to exert. It would be fatal for us

to try to impose it prematurely from without.

Peyrouton's appointment has led to expressions of dissatisfaction. We have constantly refrained from assuming the responsibility of forcing people of our choice on local authorities. We deem it wiser to hold them responsible for what they do in respect to the war.

Admiral Darlan had offered before his death to discharge any official if the Allied Staff could offer a qualified and locally acceptable substitute who could be acceptable to the Allies and to the British and American press. We were unable to make useful suggestions. A de Gaullist would have been impossible as they are considered to be extremists by the vast majority here, especially in the armed forces.

Many critics have a tendency to divide all Frenchmen into the sheep and the goats. They feel that all French must be pro-Ally or pro-German. Anyone who held office after the Armistice is labelled "Vichy" which is considered to be equivalent to pro-German.

Such is not the case as many prominent French who hate the Boche and much as Foch ever did, have felt it to be their duty to stick by their government in adversity and do their honest best to resist Germany from within.

It is about time to stop theorizing while there is a desperate fight to win, and allow the light of realism to penetrate the obscurity of ignorance about fundamentals of North African problems.

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The diplomatic papers from the State Department in the United States National Archives were useful in fleshing out various aspects and in supplying amplifying details.

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